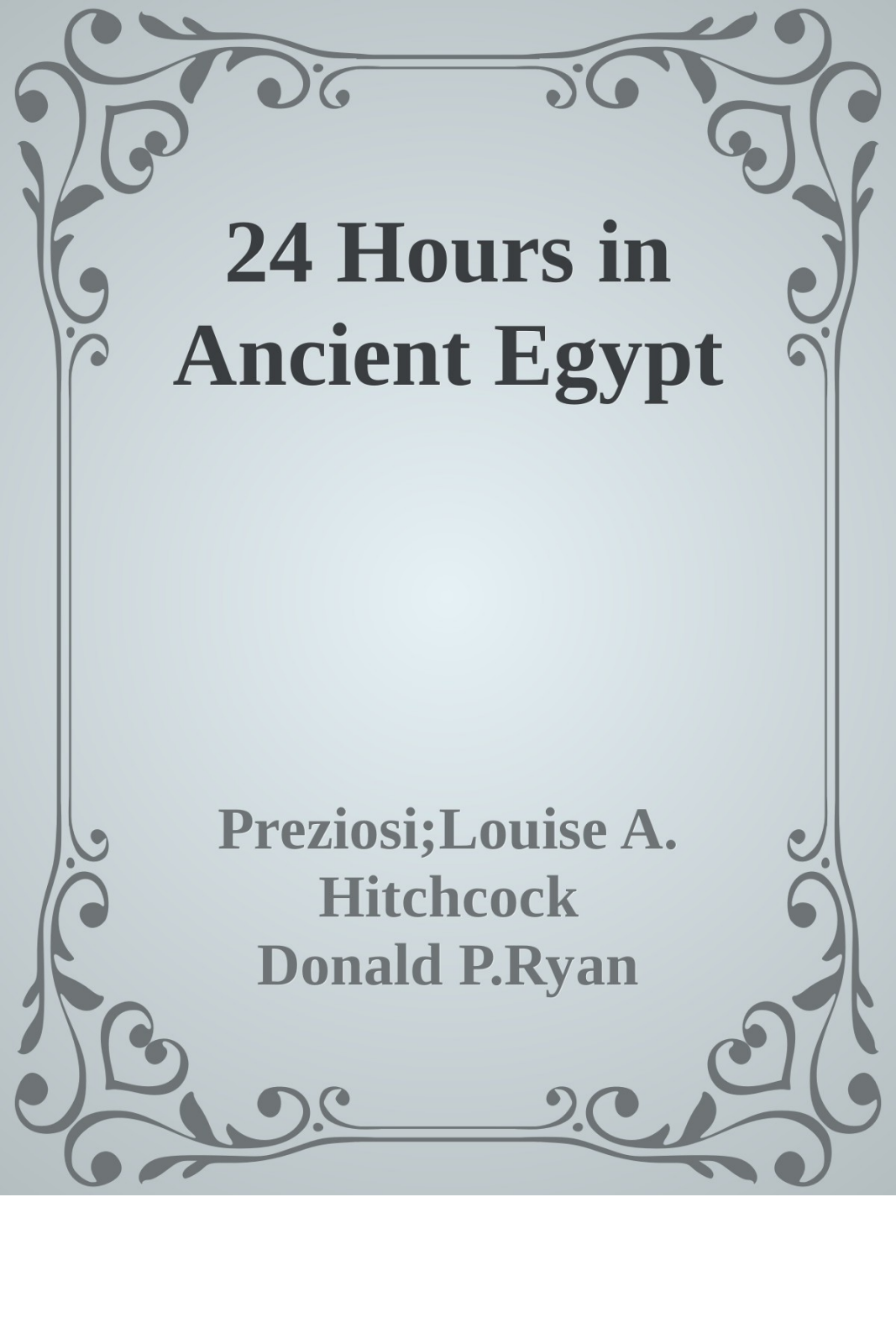
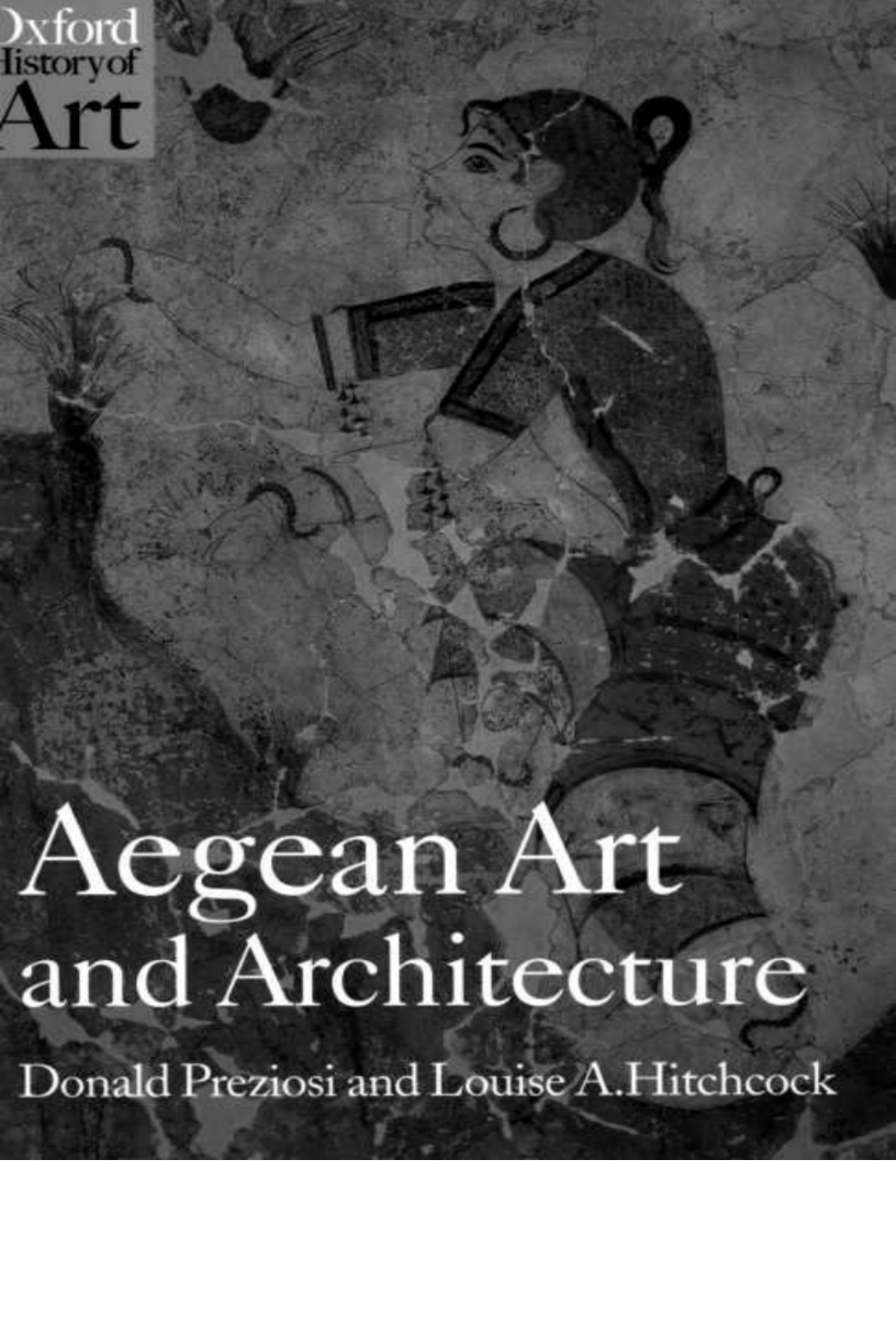


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24 Hours in Ancient Egypt

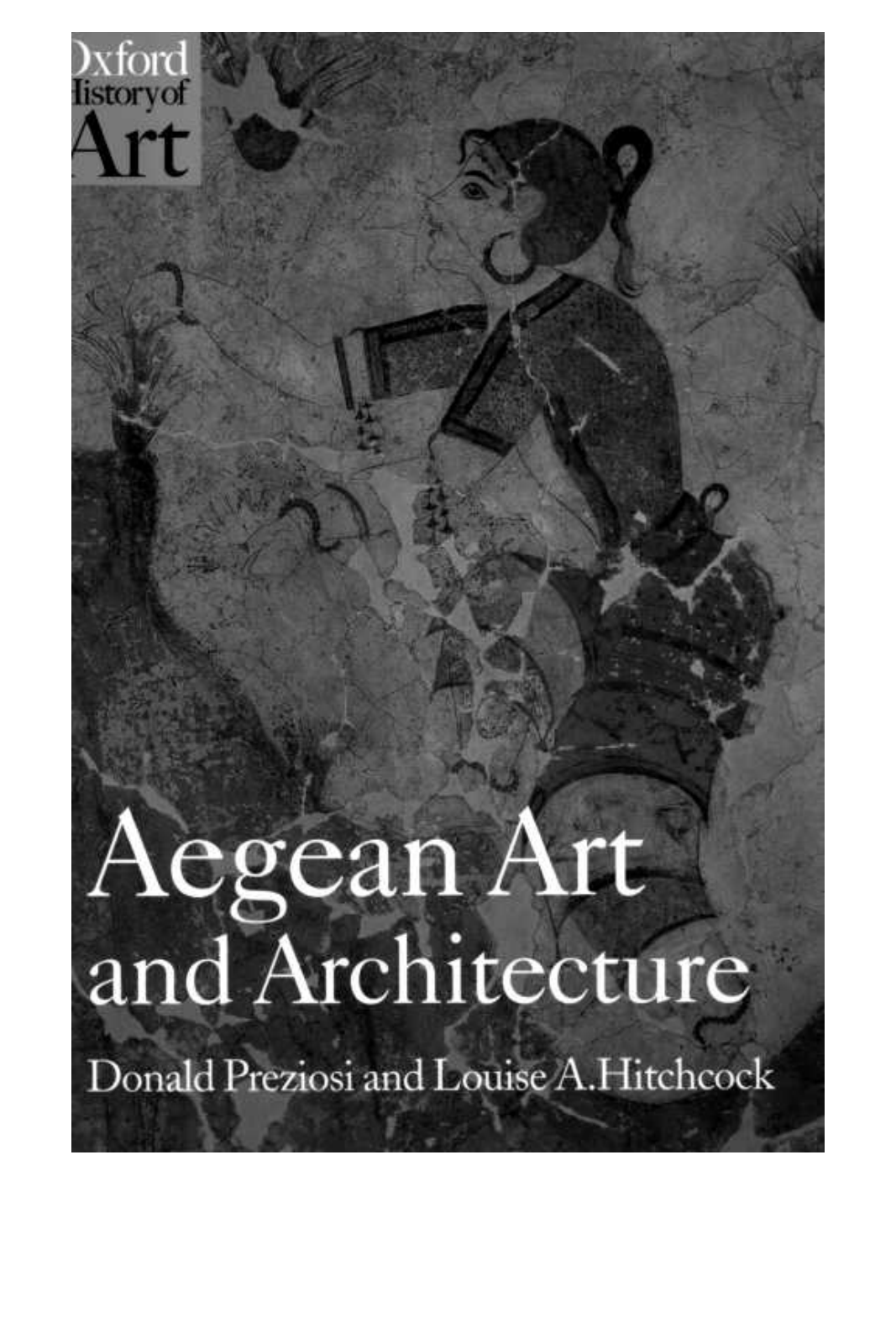
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Aegean Art and Architecture

Oxford History of Art

Donald Preziosi is Professor of Art History, UCLA where he developed and directs the art history critical theory programme, as well as the UCLA museum studies programme. He has lectured and conducted seminars for many years on the history of art history and museology, and on Aegean and Greek art and architecture in the United States, Europe, and Australia. Among his books are *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (1998); *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (1989); and *Brain of the Earth's Body: Museums and the Fabrication of Modernity* (forthcoming).

Louise A. Hitchcock is a Fulbright Scholar and Research Associate of the Institute of Archaeology, UCLA. She has presented papers on a broad range of topics in Aegean art and architecture, and participated in numerous excavations in Crete, Syria, and California. She has been the recipient of UCLA's prestigious Edward A. Dickson Fellowship and was a Fellow of the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. Her publications include *Minoan Architecture. A Contextual Analysis* (forthcoming); 'A Near Eastern Perspective on Ethnicity in Minoan Crete' (forthcoming); and 'Space the Final Frontier: Chaos, Meaning, and Grammatology in Minoan Architecture' (1997).

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Donald Preziosi and

Louise A. Hitchcock

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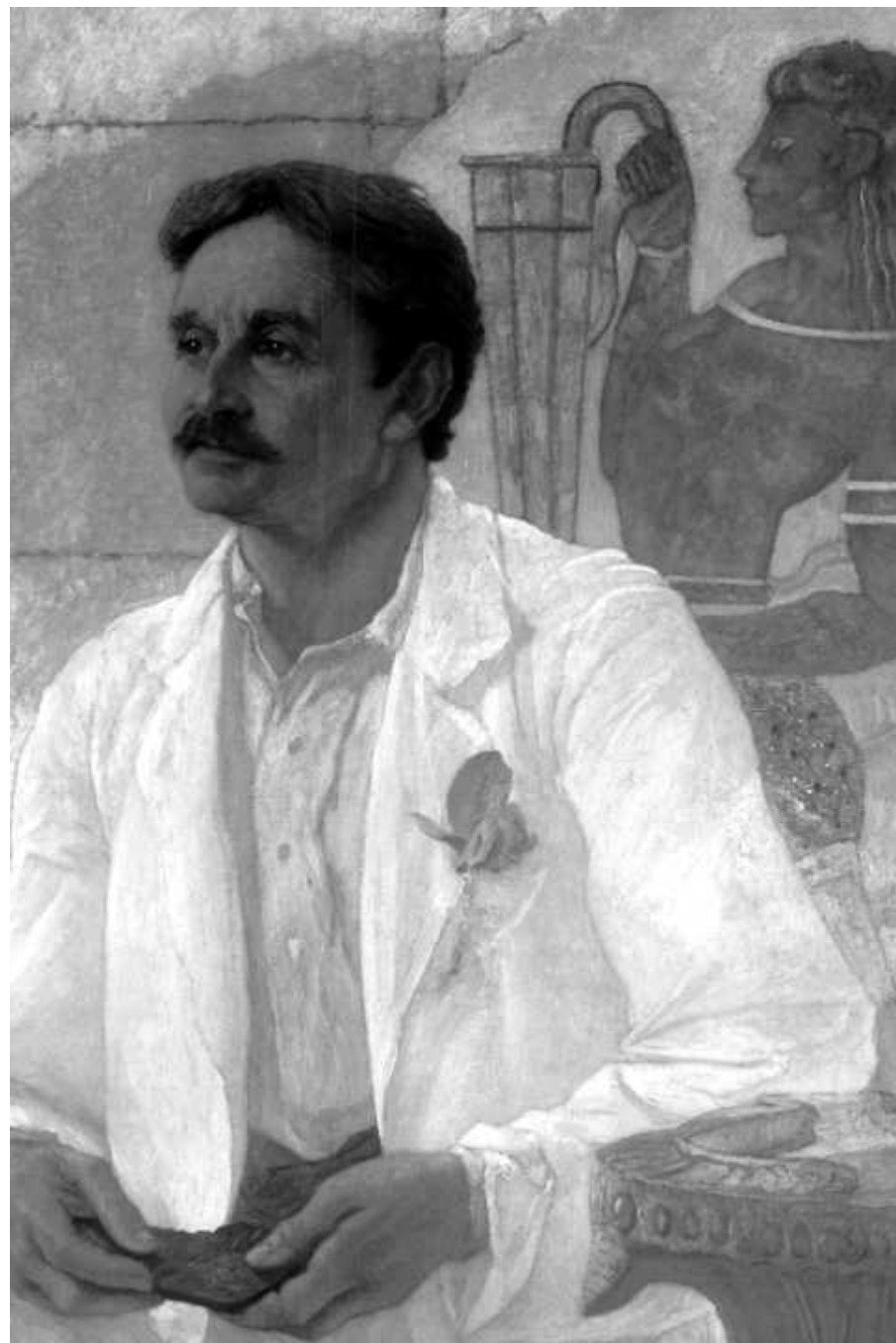
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D.P.

L. A. H.



Introduction

1

There is a land called Crete in the midst of the wine-dark sea, a fair rich land, surrounded by water, and there are many men in it, past counting, and ninety cities. They have not all the same speech; their tongues are mixed. There dwell Achaeans, there great-hearted native Cretans, there Cydonians, and Dorians in three divisions, and noble Pelasgians. Among their cities is the great city Knossos, where Minos reigned when nine years old, he that held converse with great Zeus.

Spoken by Odysseus, *Odyssey*, Book XIX, 172-9.

The recent discoveries in Crete have added a new horizon to European civilization. A new standpoint has been at the same time obtained for surveying not only the Ancient Classical World of Greece and Rome, but the modern world in which we live. This revelation of the past has thus more than an archaeological interest. It concerns all history and must affect the mental attitude of our own and future generations in many departments of knowledge.

Arthur Evans, from the Preface to Hawes and Hawes, *Crete: the Forerunner of Greece*

Our knowledge of the peoples and cultures that the first excavator of the Bronze Age city of Knossos, Sir Arthur Evans, named 'Minoan', is now a century old. Its existence had been suspected since 1878, when the Cretan antiquarian, Minos Kalokairinos, found the remains of large storage jars on the site of Kephala, several miles south of the modern port city of Herakleion. The find sparked an intense competition to identify and uncover the prehistoric city of Knossos that was not resolved for over two decades. In those intervening years, the island was ravaged by a war that finally ended centuries of Turkish occupation. Arthur Evans was able finally to purchase the entire site from its owners in 1899. Excavation began in March 1900; what came to light was beyond what anyone had imagined.

Detail of 1

In a certain sense, the Minoans are as much a twentieth-century academic artefact as they were the inhabitants of a world up to 5,000

years removed in time. While some had suspected the existence of these extraordinary Cretan cities prior to 1900, most had expected that eventually there would come to light the traces of a fortified citadel or two similar to those already known on the Greek mainland.

Yet as Crete began to be excavated more intensively in the early years of the twentieth century, and as the number of ancient sites began to multiply with each season of exploration and discovery, it soon became apparent that Homer's description of Crete as a land rich in 'ninety cities' and 'men past counting' may not have been a great exaggeration. Some sites contained remains that were not only older than those of the prehistoric citadels in Greece (Knossos itself, it turned out, had been settled since early Neolithic times and has proven to be one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited settlements), but they seemed to provide evidence of a society whose art and architecture were in form and style strikingly different. To scholars of the time, such differences would have suggested the presence of distinct ethnic groups.

As the discoveries of prehistoric sites on the mainland seemed to give archaeological flesh to more and more of the 'Heroic Age' portrayed by the Homeric epics and other early Greek texts, so too did the new excavations on Crete seem to give shape and substance to tales of the Minotaur and the Labyrinth; of Theseus and Ariadne; of Minos and Icarus. The subtlety and complexity of Cretan art and architecture seemed to lend material credence to the stories of that great Cretan artist-inventor whom the later Greeks called Daedalus: the designer of mazes, automata, and flying machines; the primordial inventor of writing and of art itself. The old legends, in short, may not have been nostalgic fantasies of a lost golden age spun out of whole cloth, but rather seemed to be dim memories of a very real, rich, and vibrant civilization antedating the world of the Greeks by many centuries. The Minoans, not the Greeks, were now the 'first Europeans'.

But who exactly were these Minoans of Crete? Evans named them after one of the legendary rulers of Knossos, King Minos, who in Greek mythology was one of three brothers born to the father of the gods, Zeus, and a Levantine princess with the (Greek) name of Europa. Their union was said to have been consummated on the shore of the Bay of Matala in south-central Crete (near the Bronze Age port at Kommos), to which Zeus (in the guise of a white bull) had swum with the princess on his back. Minos' two brothers were named Rhadamanthys and Sarpedon, and the later Greeks installed this male trinity as the wise old guardians of their underworld.

For Evans, the term Minoan was, above all, an emblem of this people's difference from the world of the mainland 'Mycenaeans'. What was being unearthed at Knossos, and what had been discovered in 1901 by Italian excavators at Phaistos to the south (and very rapidly thereafter by others elsewhere on the island), were traces of what Aegean scholars had long predicted, and which archaeologists had been looking for: the cosmopolitan source, centre, and origin of the civilization whose (later) margins were sung about by Homer.

There is still a very great deal that we do not know about these peoples. We do not know what names the prehistoric Cretans, Greek mainlanders, or other Aegean islanders may have had for themselves. We cannot be sure that any single name we assign to them-even as a convenient way of referring regionally to the stylistic history and development of their artefacts and cities-properly reflects any historically fixed or singular ethnic or racial identity. We do not know how the population of Crete during its two-millennium-long Bronze Age might have been distinct from their contemporaries in Greece, the Aegean islands, or Anatolia, or whether they were in fact a single people, at one or another period. Homer's much later listing of the 'men past counting' named at least seven different groups living in Crete at the time of the Trojan War, at the end of the Aegean Bronze Age, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the situation was similar at earlier times in the history of the island.

Outside the Aegean, the area and its people(s) were known in Egypt and the Near East. Men in Minoan (or generically Aegean) costume bearing gifts appear in some Egyptian wall paintings: one among many possible traces of social and/or economic exchange between the regions. The name Keftiu found in Egyptian texts, the Akkadian name Kaptaru, and the name Caphtor found in Hebrew sacred texts have all been understood as referring to Crete, or possibly the Aegean area more generally-what Egyptians also referred to as the 'islands in the midst of the Great Green'. In recent years, the dramatic discovery in the Nile Delta of traces of wall paintings in a Late Minoan style (see Chapter 6) have added new fuel to speculation about the actual historical identities and interconnections of peoples throughout the eastern Mediterranean.'

Ethnic-or at least linguistic-heterogeneity in the Aegean and in Crete ('they have not the same speech; their tongues are mixed') may be reflected in the existence of several systems of writing found on the island during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, although their relative chronologies remain a matter of some dispute. While working at Knossos, Evans had uncovered many examples of several distinct

writing systems; in fact, he had long been familiar with the markings, and had speculated early on, prior to his first visit to the island (and, as it turned out, correctly) that they may have had a Cretan origin. These included an earlier hieroglyphic-like script, in what Evans saw as two different versions (A and B), and two syllabic or alphabetic systems. Only one of these-the Linear B script used both on Crete and the mainland in the Late Bronze Age-has been satisfactorily deciphered as an early form of Greek. The earlier syllabary (Linear A) remains undeciphered and seems not closely related to the language of the Linear B script. It may bear some similarities to languages such as Luvian, known in western Anatolia in later times, whilst incorporating loan-words from other languages or languagefamilies in the eastern Mediterranean, as was a common occurrence throughout the region. Inscriptions in languages such as Cyprominoan, and 'Eteocretan'-literally 'true Cretan'-spoken in later Greek times are also known: it (or these) may well represent a survival of one of the Bronze Age tongues spoken on Crete down into the third and second centuries BCE.'

The environment

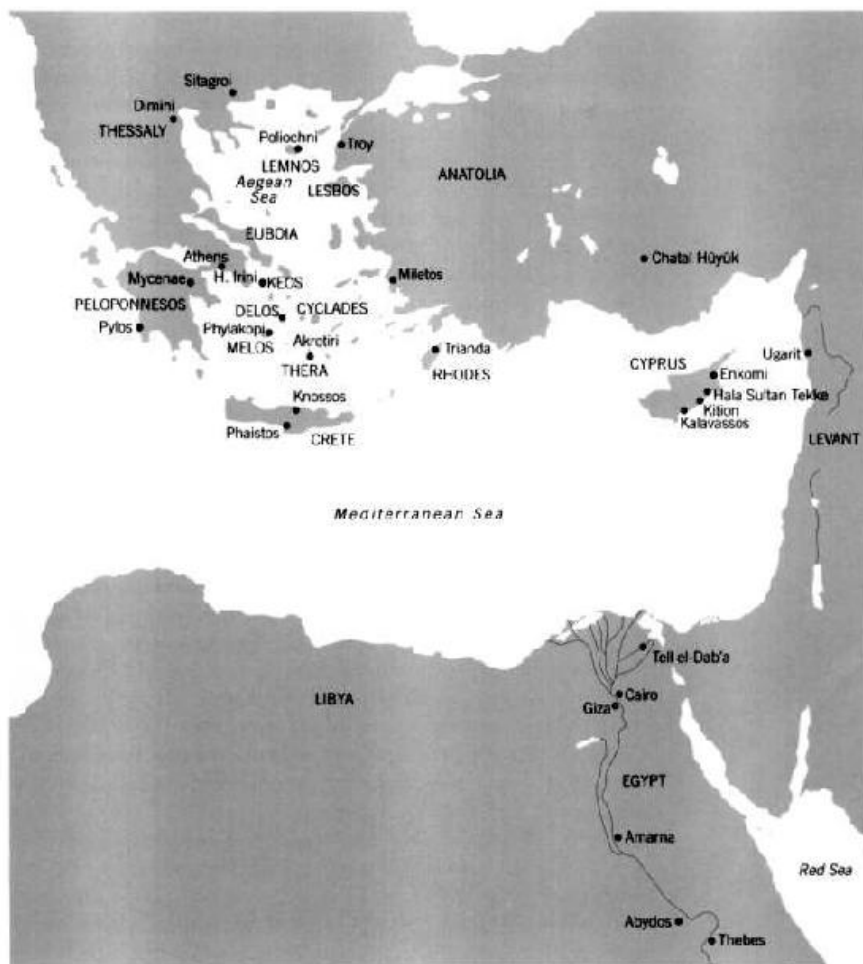
The island of Crete may itself have been an archipelago of related and unrelated peoples, occupying the many distinct regions that from antiquity to early modern times were often more easily accessible to each other by sea than over land. Given the island's size (nearly zoo kin long, the fourth largest in the Mediterranean), and the fragmented complexity of its land mass (characterized by intersecting mountain ranges with numerous small valleys and isolated arable upland plateaux), as well as its position forming the long southern boundary of the Aegean Basin, Crete would rather have been more like a third mainland: a whole world in itself, which might have supported many diverse groups living in relative isolation from each other in some periods, or joined in various kinds of alliances (or conflicts) at others.

In short, like Greece to the northwest and Anatolia (presentday Turkey) to the northeast, Crete was a geographically variegated world, a potential homeland and place of refuge for many groups. It is reasonable to expect that from the Neolithic through the Middle Bronze Age, there were many shifts in population, patterns of settlement, and connections and separations of any one group with and from another or others; there appears to be less variation in the Late Bronze Age. Not all of these changes are necessarily reflected or embodied in changes, transformations, or distinctions in the archaeological record—a fundamental problem endemic to all forms of historical, art historical, and archaeological interpretation.

The human built environments of the Aegean are intimately connected to their settings, and cannot be adequately understood or appreciated without them. A glance at the map on p. 5 will suggest that, geographically and ecologically, the Aegean Basin is a very diverse region, made up of scores of islands of habitable size (and a great many more that are not), scattered, for the most part within sight of each other, between the two land masses of Greece and Turkey. Directly north of Crete is a group of islands commonly known as the Cyclades, so called because they appear to circle the small central island of Delos, a key religious sanctuary in Hellenic Greek times with traces of Bronze Age remains. During the Early Bronze Age, as we shall see, the Cyclades supported artistic practices which were (at least in some media) partly distinct from those elsewhere.

The Greek and Turkish mainlands have highly complex and jagged coastlines, made up of hundreds of bays and promontories. In fact, the islands of the Aegean are the submerged peaks of a large network of

mountains running southeast from the Balkans through Greece and disappearing down into the sea. The southernmost Aegean island, Crete is as far from Athens to the northwest as it is from the coast of Libya to the south; at various times in its history, Crete has been an economic and cultural intermediary between Greece and the Aegean and the wider region of the eastern Mediterranean.



Map 1

The Aegean and neighbouring areas

Climatically, the region is relatively uniform, with little extreme variation from east to west; variations are often more marked vertically, between the coastal areas and valleys of both mainlands

and the mountainous uplands. Some mountains maintain snow-covered peaks for half of the year, even as far south as Crete. The northern portions of Greece and the more northerly islands are more densely forested, and are generally cooler in winter than the areas to the south, which remain temperate to warm most of the year. In general, the climate of the Aegean Basin, from Crete in the south to Macedonia and Thrace in the north, shades gradually from a warm Mediterranean zone to a temperate continental one. The great island of Cyprus to the east, another meeting place for various peoples and cultures, shares the climatic conditions of the southern Aegean.

As with the larger Mediterranean islands, Crete, Cyprus, and Rhodes resemble their adjacent mainlands in ecological variety. In some places Crete is quite rugged, and in fact has some of the highest mountain peaks in Greece, forming part of a continuous chain running through the island from west to east. There are unique isolated upland plateaux on east and west, and one of the deepest gorges in Europe is in the southwest. Inaccessible parts of the west of the island have retained the dense evergreen forest cover which some believe covered much of Crete as well as southern Greece in antiquity, but which has been lost to overgrazing and charcoal making before modern times, and to rapid urbanization in the twentieth century.

Crete, Cyprus, and Greece are made up of extremely varied, often rough and rocky terrain, fragmenting habitable and arable land into many small isolated pockets. Only about 20 per cent of the Greek peninsula itself is arable; extensive areas of farmland are more common in the northern and north-central parts of the peninsula, as they are in Anatolia, along the western coast. What usable farming land there is in the Cyclades is contained today in extensive terracing of these essentially rocky limestone islands. In Crete, and apart from some upland plateaux, it is only in the south that there is any very extensive flat land, the Mesara Valley or Plain, some 50 km long, which opens out to the sea on the west.

Traces of human habitation are found in the Aegean as early as Palaeolithic times (before c.10,000 BCE) but it is mainly beginning with the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages that settlements occur all over the region, even in isolated and remote valleys and upland areas. Scores of small settlements are found on the mainland and the islands beginning in the Early Bronze Age, and during that period there is evidence of fairly routine and extensive interconnections between sites in the islands, Greece, and Crete. Some island and mainland sites were strongly fortified and densely built, and continued to be inhabited (although perhaps not with the same populations) for

many centuries afterward.

The Bronze Age population of the Aegean was at its greatest during the Late Period, and some cities may have been quite densely populated. At its height, the city of Knossos may have had more than 50,000-75,000 inhabitants, but such estimates remain highly speculative, given our fragmentary knowledge of the site. Knossos has been inhabited since Early Neolithic times, c.6000 BCE.

Discovering the Aegean world

Our contemporary understanding of the art and architecture of Greece, Crete, and the wider world of the Bronze Age Aegean is the complex product of excavation, interpretation, and reconstruction carried out since the late nineteenth century by researchers from many countries. As with any professional field of study, many of the earlier observations and conclusions of Aegean archaeologists and art historians have come to be questioned by later scholars. Many of these changes are reflected in the programmatic and theoretical organization of this book. They have had two equally powerful and partly related causes: new archaeological discoveries and new theoretical and methodological developments.

During the time period conventionally framing what has traditionally been referred to as the birth, growth, maturity, and decline of Aegean civilization (roughly c.3000-c.1100 BCE), archaeological discoveries have expanded our knowledge of the wider world on whose western margins the population of the Aegean lived. The world to the east experienced profound and continuing transformations of a political, social, ethnic, cultural, and technological nature. Powerful and at times aggressively expansive kingdoms and empires emerged and declined, and some peoples seem to have been as much on the move at certain periods as they were sedentary at others.

Continuing work throughout the eastern Mediterranean has helped to clarify (and often dramatically alter our understanding of) the complex and changing relationships of the Aegean world to the wider arena within which Hittites, Egyptians, Assyrians, and other peoples played out their hegemonic internal struggles, expansionist politics, and economic adventures. Important new cities and archives have come to light in the Near East in recent years. Also, more and more traces of what appears to be an Aegean presence in Egypt, Anatolia, and the countries currently occupying the Levantine littoral also come to light yearly. These new discoveries have prompted a re-evaluation of older materials and interpretations: this book reflects a number of these new perspectives.

Chronological chart

	EGYPT	CRETE	CYCLADES	MAINLAND GREECE
3000 BCE	Old Kingdom	Prepalatial (EMI-III) Houses: Vasiliki, Myrtos <i>Tholos</i> ; Mesara	Early Cycladic 'frying pans' marble idols	Early Helladic House of the Tiles, Lerna
2000 BCE	Middle Kingdom Twelfth Dynasty (1991-1786 BCE) Imported MM II pottery Hyksos invasion (?)	Protopalatial (MMI-II) Old palaces: Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia Kamaraes ware Destruction of old palaces by earthquake (MM II/III)	Middle Cycladic Minoan trade and settlements	Middle Helladic Arrival of Greeks (?) Minoan pottery
1700 BCE	Second Intermediate Period Hyksos rule Tell el-Dab'a frescoes	Neopalatial (MMIIIA-B) New palaces at Knossos and Phaistos begun	Settlement at Akrotiri on Thera	Grave Circle B, Mycenae
1600 BCE	New Kingdom Eighteenth Dynasty (1570 BCE)	Late Minoan (LMIA) Palace at Knossos rebuilt after earthquake	Late Cycladic Height of Minoan influence Houses with paintings Thera volcano erupts	Late Helladic I Grave Circle A, Mycenae
1500 BCE	<i>Keftiu</i> representations on Theban tombs	Late Minoan (LMIB) Marine-style pottery		Late Helladic II <i>Tholos</i> tombs Vaphio tomb
1450 BCE		Destruction of Minoan sites Late Minoan (LMII) Mycenaeans at Knossos (?) Warrior graves Palace style pottery Late frescoes		Late Helladic IIB
1400 BCE		Late Minoan (LMIIIA) Destruction of palace at Knossos (1375 BCE(?)) Reoccupation of palace	Mycenaeans in control	Late Helladic IIIA Mycenaean palaces Expansion of Mycenaean trade to Levant
1300 BCE	Nineteenth Dynasty First raid of Sea Peoples	Late Minoan (LMIIIB)		Late Helladic IIIB Great age of Mycenaean palaces and frescoes Burning of palaces
1200 BCE	Ramses III (1198-1166 BCE) Defeat of Sea Peoples	Late Minoan (LMIIIC)	Mycenaean refugees to islands (?) Cyprus and Levant	Late Helladic IIIC Some reoccupation

We are beginning to understand some of the ways in which the Aegean archipelago was a component in a larger mosaic of peoples and cultures throughout the eastern Mediterranean. A number of once sharp artistic and cultural distinctions between Minoans, Mycenaeans, and others have come to be blurred. Yet the overall picture remains far from clear, and it seems evident that the Aegean may have been more closely tied to the wider Mediterranean (or at least Near

Eastern) world at certain times in the 2,000-year period covered by this book, and more isolated from the outside world at others.

This increase in our knowledge and understanding has both reflected and contributed to certain important paradigm shifts that have been taking place more widely in the practices of cultural history, archaeology, and anthropology, and in the theories and methodologies of art history and museology, during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Ideas of agency, causality, and influence, as well as fundamental assumptions about the nature of the relationships between cultural phenomena and social, racial, ethnic, gender, national, and individual identities, are undergoing continuous rethinking.

Both the purview and functions of interpretative practice in fields such as archaeology and art history are being transformed in ways that could not have been anticipated, or easily predicted, a generation ago. In both disciplines, more sustained attention has come to be paid to a wider range of materials and contexts in the enterprise of historical reconstruction, and there has come about a greater explicit attention to the tacit theoretical assumptions underlying modern disciplinary practice.

Some of the more significant changes to have occurred in the approach to understanding the past have had to do with the reassessment of theories of the nature and constitution of national or ethnic identities, in particular in their relationships to forms of social and cultural life. The racial ideologies of a century ago could, with little effective opposition, support Arthur Evans and others who crafted a richly detailed picture of a singularly brilliant, artistically unique, technologically advanced, and racially or ethnically distinct people ruling Crete and the Aegean, as different from their contemporary peers in Egypt and the Near East as they were from their warlike mainland Mycenaean 'inferiors'.

Such perspectives regarding the nature of the relationships between a people and the styles of its art and culture were grounded in very particular hypotheses, of which the most prominent was the notion that artistic style was a direct reflection and reliable trace of the unique, singular, and inimitable inner spirit, essence, or soul of a people. This belief was widely adhered to during the era of the nineteenth-century formation of modern nation states, and was supportive of burgeoning national and colonial heritage industries, encompassing a wide range of practices from artistic connoisseurship to tourism to museology. Much of it remains tenacious in the

contemporary popular imagination, in both developed and developing countries.

A good deal of nineteenth-century academic practice of a historical and interpretative nature was by and large sympathetic to the needs of European (and other) nationalisms, reflecting and supporting the growth of ethnic, regional, and national heritage industries. Distinctiveness or uniqueness of ethnic or national identity was linked in pragmatic ways to the technologies of social discipline and colonial administration, including the management of diverse ethnic populations, both at home and abroad. Distinctions in race, ethnicity, or national character could be supposed to be proven or demonstrated by materially definable differences in artistic style and cultural expression.

The modern practices of archaeology, art history, anthropology, and museology, in short, developed within the context of the rise of modern nation states and their imperial extensions, and have contributed concretely to their social and educational needs. During the latter half of the twentieth century, their academic progeny have retained many of their older social functions while beginning to evolve beyond the more explicit racisms and ethnocentrisms of their nineteenth-century models.

At present, in the humanities and social sciences, many such foundational assumptions are being actively rethought and reassessed. The claim that for each particular people (self-distinguishable on the grounds of specific styles of art, religion, language, culture, or forms of governance) there should exist a materially distinct homeland was always historically problematic and not entirely uncontested; nevertheless, its general principles came to provide the implicit subtext of modern historical scholarship.

The generation of scholars who discovered and disseminated knowledge about the Bronze Age cities of Crete, Greece, and the Aegean islands generally presumed that there were direct and reflective connections between biology and culture: between race or ethnicity, social structure, ethical advancement or decline, and artistic and cultural 'expression'. Indeed, the very possibility of systematically or scientifically reading archaeological material as historical data was firmly tied to such a belief: the presence of a distinctive artefact style could be assumed with confidence to be a palpable index of a particular society, ethnicity, or race. Formal changes in style could be read (by the properly trained eye) as indices of other changes in society: gradual transformations might be linked, plausibly, to the

internal dynamics of unfolding aesthetic principles or production technologies, whilst abrupt changes might signal changes in population through migration, replacement, or conquest.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, changes in artistic style and material culture were closely linked to current ideas about biological evolution, technological progress, and the rise and decline of peoples, races, and nations. Such notions were themselves implicit in the very concepts and practices of the modern discipline of Art History, as advanced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by Winckelmann, Kant, and Hegel.;

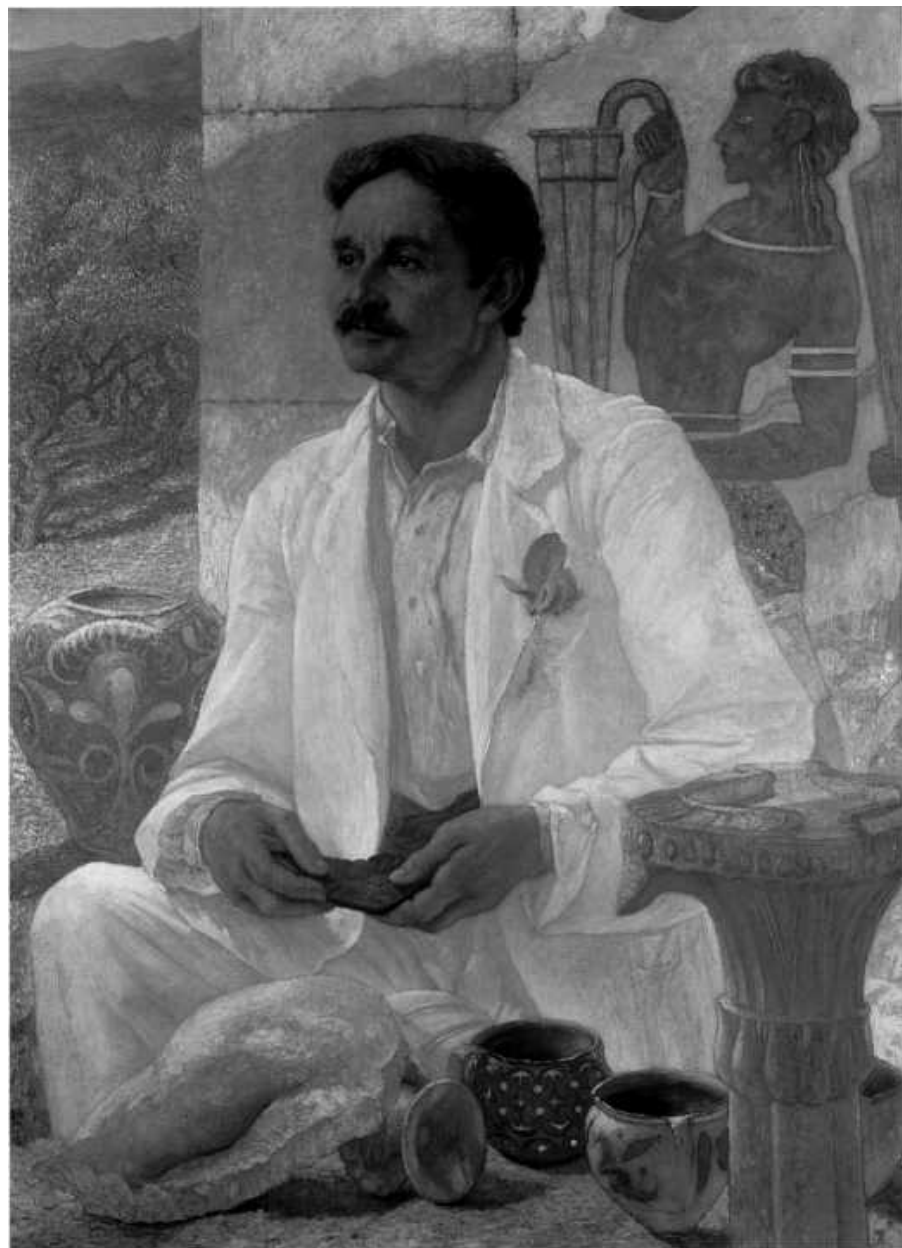
The intellectual environment in which Arthur Evans (1851-1941) [11] grew up was strongly shaped by the scholarly interests and pursuits of his eminent father, John Evans, in archaeology, numismatics, and geology, as well as by his family's friendships with Charles Darwin (1809-82) and Augustus Henry Lane Fox (1827-1900). The latter (who in later years took the name of Pitt Rivers) developed widely influential, systematically formulated ideas about the cognitive evolution of peoples as demonstrated by the historical development of their artefacts.^a

By the time that Evans had begun to excavate Knossos, he was Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. In the mid-1890s, when he was supervising the reorganization and transfer of the museum collection from the old Ashmolean building in Broad Street (now the Museum of the History of Science) to its present location in Beaumont Street, the new Pitt Rivers Museum was being constructed as an annexe to the Oxford University Museum in South Parks Road. It was designed to exemplify in minute and encyclopedic detail its founder's ideas about typology, universal human cultural evolution, and their relationships to ethnic (and ethical) advancement or decline.¹

The discoveries in Crete that began a century ago-and even more so than those at Mycenae and Troy a generation earlier-were nothing less than stunning, and rapidly had a profound effect upon the modern popular understanding of early European antiquity. All of these discoveries powerfully shaped modern European images of its own origins and heritage. Suddenly, European civilization was not only as ancient as that of Egypt, but also in its own way distinct and original in form and spirit. But this new Minoan civilization could not be fixed in place as a provincial reflection of any of the societies of the Near East, nor could it be easily attached to its successors in Greece or elsewhere (except perhaps as their superior and exemplar). It was, in fact, an enigma. For Evans and others at the time, it appeared to

provide a whole 'new horizon to European civilization', and 'a new standpoint' not only on antiquity, but on the modern world, thereby 'concerning all history'.

Starting in the 1870s, archaeologists working at Mycenae, Tiryns, Troy, and elsewhere in the Aegean had begun to uncover a world whose material traces seemed to make visually palpable the textual world of the Homeric heroes. These fortified citadels were likely to have been the real homes and graves of the legendary Ajax, Atreus, and Agamemnon; of Clytemnestra and of Helen of Troy. Engravings and photographs of these ruins began to illustrate European and American school textbooks of Homer and the Greek playwrights, and of ancient grammar and history, during the final two decades of the nineteenth century, and have become a permanent part of the iconography of that educational genre ever since.





1

Portrait of Sir Arthur Evans (1851-1941) surrounded by Minoan artefacts. Evans, keeper of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, began the first excavations of the Bronze Age city and Palace of Knossos in 1900.

2

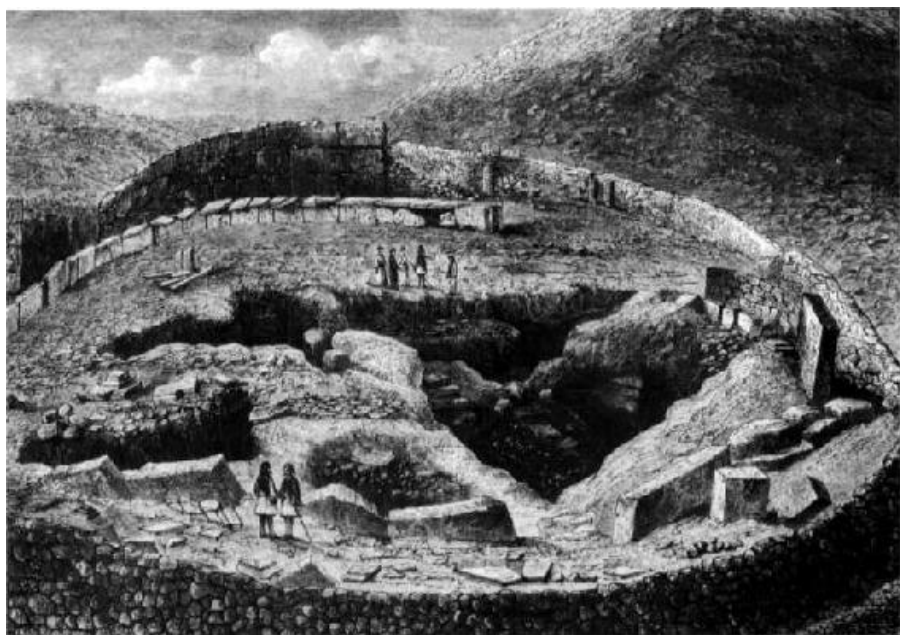
Sydney Hodges

Portrait of Heinrich Schliemann, 1877.

Schliemann is best known
for his excavations at Troy
and Mycenae.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, scholars such as Heinrich Schliemann [2] (1822-90) had been attracted to Crete, being convinced by the increasing dissemination of prehistoric pottery, gems, and other small artefacts on the Greek and European markets that an important Mycenaean-era site remained to be discovered. The most likely site was agreed to be that of the ancient city of Knossos, whose later Greek and Roman ruins had been known for some time, and which was known in Homeric times as 'the great city ... where Minos reigned', in Odysseus' words [3].

But what Evans began uncovering in 1900 at Knossos (the rights to whose excavation he acquired in intensive competition with German and French archaeologists) was a world not only older, but to all appearances greatly superior in art, architecture, and technology to that of mainland Greece. To Evans' generation, this Minoan world was a unique, artistically brilliant, and technologically advanced cosmopolitan culture, with its own very distinctive art and architecture and its own systems of writing, on a par with its contemporaries in Egypt and the Near East, borrowing from and trading with them, yet independent and unattached, unaffected by their political and military upheavals, and their periodic imperialisms. Some in fact saw in Crete a world of refuge from the latter: a kind of Bronze Age melting pot of refugees.



3

Panoramic view of Schliemann's excavation in the Acropolis of Mycenae. In the foreground is Grave Circle A, within which can be seen four of the ste/ai (tombstones) found scattered in the citadel's cemetery.

Virtually overnight, the discoveries in Crete cast into a dour and provincial shadow the world of what the previous scholarly generation had come to call the 'Mycenaean' mainland citadels, with their warrior chieftains, their burial hoards of golden plunder, and their (to Minoanist or Hellenocentric eyes) rather amateurish painting and clumsy folk sculpture. The aesthetic contrasts between the art works of Crete and mainland Greece were so striking in the eyes of the first generation of Minoan archaeologists as to suggest the presence either of two quite distinct peoples or races, or of two related peoples distinguished by occupying opposite ends of a spectrum running from the urbane and civilized to the rustic, militaristic, and primitive.

So much would have been consistent with archaeological and ethnographic attitudes at the time, and thus it had seemed to Evans and his team, who rapidly uncovered at Knossos much of what they had come to refer to as the 'Palace of Minos' within several excavation seasons. Their impressions seemed to be echoed by the finds at Phaistos [4] and nearby Haghia Triadha by the Italian scholar Federigo Halbherr, and by Greek, French, and American

archaeologists working elsewhere. In the east of the island, at Gournia, the American archaeologist Harriet Boyd Hawes [51] had excavated an entire small town, and British excavators were working at larger eastern settlements such as Palaikastro and Kato Zakro. Within a few short years, and by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, a number of widely circulated and influential comprehensive overviews of the Minoan or Aegean civilizations had been published. Evans published his own encyclopedic overview of the entire Minoan civilization in four thick volumes, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, from the early 1920s to the late 1930s.⁶



4

Workmen with a pithos (storage jar) from the Minoan Palace at Phaistos. The photograph was taken at the time of the early excavations at Phaistos, begun in 1900 by Federigo Halbherr (d. 1930) and Luigi Pernier (1874-1937) several weeks after the close of Evans' first season at Knossos.

Minoan art seemed to delight in the naturalistic rendering of the richness and variety of nature, and seemed to portray a rich and peaceful world with women in colourful costumes dancing bare-bosomed under trees in public squares, and slim young kilted men exercising their skills in acrobatic bull leaping. The world being read in Minoan paintings and ceramics by early archaeologists (and even some art historians) was one of humans in harmony with a natural world of cats, monkeys, and pheasants cavorting in lush landscapes of flowers by flowing streams, and of dolphins, sea urchins, fish, and

octopuses swimming through well-rendered undersea worlds. In the art of Crete, there were few if any scenes of strife, and no obvious traces of fortification walls ringing Minoan cities-a situation which seemed to differ sharply from most other cities of the eastern Mediterranean and Near East of the time. Of weapons there seemed to be few remaining, either in the ruins of buildings or in graves, at least until later times.

5

Photograph of American archaeologist Harriet Boyd Hawes (1871-1945) sorting sherds at Herakleion, 1902. Hawes was best known for her work in eastern Crete, particularly her excavation of the Minoan town of Gournia.



By contrast, Mycenaean visual art seemed to delight mainly in scenes of war and carnage; in silhouetted figures in chariots perpetually leaving home to smite enemies, like some small-scale provincial pharaohs; and in (mostly) men crudely drawn and living out their adventures not in lush natural landscapes but rather in a voided world of blank and neutral terrain peopled by their own militant egos. In art historical terms, Mycenaean art could readily attach itself to the early Hellenic arts of the monochrome Greek 'Dark Ages', of the Protogeometric and Geometric Periods, with their silhouetted pottery scenes of war, burial, and lamentation.

Minoan art seemed to portray a vastly different social world quite detached from all this: an Eden-like land of its own without art historical ancestors or cousins, and with only lesser and diminished progeny. Early scholars saw Crete as the garden homeland of the First Europe-itself named, after all, for the Princess Europa on whom the god Zeus fathered the first Cretan 'king', Minos. Evans was convinced he had discovered 'the first throne of Europe' in the stone seat in a suite of rooms off the northwest corner of the central court of his Knossian 'palace' [6].

6

The so-called 'Throne Room' of the Minoan palace at Knossos, in the course of its excavation, in Evans' first season on the site, 1900.



These caricatures were enshrined for most of the twentieth century in the canonical and formulaic presentations of several generations of art history survey books. Here the Minoans and Mycenaeans routinely made a brief cameo appearance before the survey began its mainline European academic railway journey and evolutionary chronology northwestward from Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages and Renaissance to the world of (Euro-American) Modern Art. Students might readily learn how to distinguish the artistic styles (and thus the peoples) labelled Minoan and Mycenaean by what was once called the instant octopus test-a Minoan octopus would always spread itself

sinuously around the surface of a pot, delighting in its curves and volumes, whilst a Mycenaean one always stood upright, jagged, or mute, as if having just been stunned by a powerful electric shock (compare 61a and 61b).

And the Minoans (or Mycenaeans) could always serve as foils to the crisp and lucid 'classicism' of later Athenian architecture and sculpture, depending upon the tastes of the textbook writer. As one of them put it in the 1950s, 'the Minoans ... may have been lovers of the picturesque at all costs; in fact their architecture resembles their other arts in showing no sense of form'.⁷

When artefacts that to modern archaeological eyes appeared to be of palpably superior artistic skill were unearthed on the mainland or elsewhere, their stylistic affinities with objects of Cretan manufacture were commonly foregrounded, and hypotheses were routinely put forward (at least by Minoanists) regarding the importation (or piracy) of luxury goods from Crete. Some writers would speak of the residency at Mycenae or Tiryns of Minoan artists or craftsmen working for mainland military overlords and their courts: a diaspora of rich Minoan artistic and technological talent before and after the collapse of the Cretan 'palace' economies in the Late Bronze Age."

Another facet of the Minoans-versus-Mycenaeans popular and scholarly competition, particularly during the last quarter of the twentieth century, was the highlighting of apparently sharp distinctions between Crete and mainland Greece in the visual depictions of men and women. In Cretan art, and in contrast to the visual arts of the Mycenaean world (as well as to the art of contemporary Egypt and the Near East), women appeared to play a rather prominent role in what came to be read as representations of social life. At least there appeared to be no strongly marked inequality in what were taken to be more or less literal depictions of men and women. The art of the Mycenaeans, and thus by presumption their social world, seemed very much that of a rigidly patriarchal society, deeply invested in all the trappings of military machismo, with virtually no images of women apart from 'goddess' figurines and what appeared to be 'divine' females on rings, pots, and seals.

The Mycenaean Greek world-even before the decipherment of the Linear B tablets found on Crete and the mainland as an early form of Greek-was plausibly linked to the well-documented patriarchal and misogynistic society of the later Hellenic Greek period. The world of Minoan Crete seemed to some observers to have been either more strongly egalitarian, or possibly even matriarchal or matrilineal in

organization. In Minoan art, and even more obviously after the discovery and excavation of the site of Akrotiri on the island of Thera with its remarkable wall paintings, women and girls seem to be everywhere, in both 'mortal' and 'divine' roles, and in positions of social prominence or at least high public visibility. In some miniature frescoes from Knossos (see 47), women are depicted larger and more individuated in the foreground of public festivals, against backgrounds made up of masses of undifferentiated males.

Such interpretative tendencies had very obvious links to, and both reflected and appeared to validate, certain polemical positions in various ongoing debates on gender and sexuality in recent times, once again reminding us that our picture of the Bronze Age Aegean is in no small measure a twentieth-century artefact, tailored to, and understandable within the frameworks of, the social needs, attitudes, and functions of modern social-historical interpretation. All historical reconstructions function in the present to construct and define our own world as a product of one or another desirable (or undesirable) legacy.

Images of Minoan women and of signs and symbols associated with Minoan Crete have recently played roles in contemporary feminist, gay, and lesbian symbologies, ideologies and historiographies. To some in the late twentieth century, Minoan Crete came to be seen as the realm of a Mother Goddess driven underground or silenced by phallocratic (or male homosocial) Hellenes, a process imagined to have begun with the rise of the Mycenaean Greeks. Such scenarios seemed consonant with our archaeological and historical knowledge of early Hellenic sanctuaries, where in some cases (for example at Delphi or Olympia) an earlier focus upon a female divinity (Hera or Gaia) came to be eclipsed, submerged, or marginalized by the cults and monumental temples devoted to certain male gods (Zeus, Apollo)."

It may well be the case that the relative position of genders in Minoan society (or societies) was anomalous with respect to the more markedly patriarchal practices of mainland Greece and the Near East. And the social mores intuited from readings of Minoan paintings did seem to suggest a world that may have been different from what can be inferred from reading the misogynistically strict code of behaviour inscribed on a wall in the Cretan city of Gortyna in the fifth century BCE but presumably reflecting an earlier tradition, one taken by some to represent the social attitudes of a Dorian immigrant or ruling class on the island.¹⁰

But once again, as at any time and place, what in modern times might be routinely read as visual representations do not in these contexts necessarily re-present any actual social roles, relationships, or desires, whether dominant or marginal. There are, for example, a number of features of Aegean painting which appear at times to modify or run counter to certain widely shared Bronze Age conventions of coloration and dress in the depiction of men and women. In some paintings, what appear to be men or women are depicted either with the coloration or (to our eyes) the commonly expected clothing of another gender.

How we are to interpret such depictions (if indeed the term depiction is itself applicable) is by no means obvious or clear, and the textual and archaeological evidence for social life and behaviour is not only extremely fragmentary in this as well as in other realms of Aegean life, but what little remains of these peoples living three to five millennia ago is more often than not very ambiguous indeed. Even more fundamentally, the nature of representation and depiction, not to speak of the social and perceptual functions and roles of image making and viewing, are unlikely to be similar to those of post-Renaissance Europe.

Indeed, even over the past five centuries in Europe alone, there have been profound shifts in forms of socially dominant modes of visual perception, and in the conventional ways of seeing and construing images—all of which may alert us to the problems of projecting our own ideas onto what we take to be depictions or representations in Minoan or Aegean art. These problems will be addressed in more concrete detail in connection with the description and interpretation of Aegean artefacts in each of the subsequent chapters. For the moment, suffice it to say that the nature of gender relations and of many other facets of social life in the prehellenic Aegean is unclear at many times during its long history; this and related subjects of social structure and governance are dealt with below in Chapter 4.

At any rate, the kinds of questions being raised here intersect with our own ideas and predispositions regarding the nature of the relationships between culture, behaviour, and individual and collective identity. It is to these more fundamental problems that we will now turn, as a necessary preamble to a historical introduction to the arts and architectures of the Aegean world.

Art and art history

We have so far been speaking of Aegean (or Minoan and Mycenaean) 'art' and 'architecture'. In point of fact, such terms are distinctly modern ones. They exist and are meaningful to us because of the ways in which they function in the systems of concepts and categories-the cognitive instruments-that we customarily use to fabricate and maintain our own social worlds. Not only do these words evoke particular ranges of reference, but they also carry with them multiple zones of connotation which vary, often dramatically, over time and space. Such complexities multiply even further if we look at variations in the range of connotations of the term 'art' in the various modern European languages, not to speak of distinctions in usage according to age, nationality, ethnicity, class, occupation, and so on."

Moreover, to extend this range of variation and distinction across three or four thousand years (let alone a couple of hundred) raises some questions as to the pertinence or usefulness of these terms in the first place. This observation is especially true if the terms are employed as universal or even general categories, beyond their intended modern functions originating in the European Enlightenment and in eighteenth-century aesthetic and moral philosophy. An obvious prerequisite to any historical study such as that represented by this book would be a clarification of what is at stake in such an endeavour. If Aegean 'art' is a misnomer, then this would mean more than simply the likelihood that the Minoans, Mycenaeans, or Aegean peoples in general may not have 'had a word' for what we designate today by this term.

Neither the Greeks nor the Romans, in fact, did have a word corresponding exactly to the term art, in the modern sense of fine art, as a kind of product or practice rather than as a property of a wide variety of things and activities. In Hellenic Greek times, the term we commonly take to be roughly comparable, *tekhne*-the root of the modern term technology-had a much wider range of reference than our word art, and might be used as much in connection with pottery making and painting, as in referring to the skilful and organized manner in which an olive orchard (or city) might be planned and laid out. The Latin word *ars*, which is the formal origin of the modern English word, and the word for art in the modern languages derived from Latin, appears to have had a range of reference as broad as the Greek *tekhne*. There seems to have been nothing exactly comparable in Greek or Roman antiquity to our notion of art, in the common sense of the modern fine art commodity we are familiar with.'

What is important about all of this is that it should cause us to reflect upon the invention, diffusion, and functions of the modern concept of art in connection with its projection not only upon the material culture of societies outside the European orbit, but also upon the artefactual worlds of other times and places within Europe itself. It is important to recall the roles and functions that art and art history have had over the past two centuries in defining and constructing our own present, our own modernities. These and related issues are explored in a companion volume in this series;" the following outlines a number of the key questions which need to be examined in connection with issues pertaining to the enterprises of historical and archaeological reconstruction. As we shall see, these problems are central to a fundamental understanding of our modern professional enterprises.

In the first place, the modern use of the term art is directly and intimately tied to a concept of artistic historicity-the idea that art as such might actually have an internal or formal history of its own, which might be reconstructed and outlined both from the beginning of human times to the present, and universally, so to speak, within the framework of all societies and cultures. The possible existence of such a universal history of art, indeed, the very hypothesis that what is meant in modern times by art is something that every society has, follows as a corollary of the postulated belief that the formal features or characteristics of the arts, or in general of any aspect of the material culture of a people or group, are distinctively representative of that people.

Such a belief is tied to a parallel postulate, namely that at some level of organization common to the entire ensemble of art works of a time or place there may be found certain common traits or principles of organization or manufacture; in short, a common 'style'. The history of art came to be constituted as parallel to, and as a visual surrogate for, the historical development and evolutionary progress of societies and of their ideas, beliefs, values, and interests.

Such notions may represent a projection from empirical observations and general hypotheses about stylistic or formal consistency in the corpus of work of a single artist or craftsperson over his or her career, and they are tied closely to traditional Western notions of authorship and individuated subjectivity, particularly as articulated in Renaissance humanism. European professional interest in these issues dates from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the birth of modern connoisseurship-itself closely tied to the growing need of wealthy collectors to authenticate the antiquity of Roman, Etruscan,

and Greek objects beginning to circulate (along with countless forgeries) in European market places as prized possessions signifying elite social status, education, and aspirations.¹⁴

With the eighteenth-century development of aesthetic philosophy, and, building upon it, the nineteenth-century development of the academic discipline of art history, significant similarities were seen to exist between the consistent features or stylistic tendencies in the work of an individual and those of a related group or society (or by extension an ethnic group or race). The aims, functions, methods, and structure of the discipline of art history, in other words, cannot be understood apart from its role as one facet of the massive nineteenth-century historicization of individual and collective lives: the increasingly thoroughgoing and systematic linkage of experience to shared narratives of national growth, evolution, and progress. In this regard, the academic profession of art history shared with earlier traditions of interpretation certain assumptions which some trace back to the aims and practices of the exegesis or explanation of religious texts."

Well into the twentieth century, modern art history, connoisseurship, art criticism, and museology were very closely tied to explicit notions about national, ethnic, and ethical character, evidence for which was presumed to be made plain by the informed, systematic reading of cultural artefacts. As ethnic or national groups, Venetians might thus be clearly contrasted with Florentines, the Dutch with the French, the Germans with the Italians, the Chinese with the Japanese or Koreans, or the Greeks with the Etruscans and Romans, on the basis of demonstrable distinctions in painting, poetry, and architecture. Characteristics of whole geographical regions might be plausibly related to consistencies in artistic style claimed to persist across centuries or even millennia.

It is here that we may appreciate the potentially very great value of professional disciplines such as art history, archaeology, and ethnology to the evolving nation states of Europe and elsewhere over the past two centuries, in appearing to offer palpable and empirically verifiable 'evidence' for the persistence and fixity of national, ethnic, or racial character. In the movement to forge and instill a common and consistent national civic character for the citizens of newly emerging or recently democratizing states in Europe and elsewhere, the key component was the construction of common legacies: a heritage that could be ideally imagined and shared by a populace which might still be divided along class, linguistic, ethnic, or religious lines, but which might find its place in narrative histories and museum

and tourist itineraries.

The roles of 'art' and of 'art history' in this vast enterprise of fabricating the modern nation state (and of transforming the populations of emergent states into citizens) should be evident in that they provided a concrete means for literally envisioning a shared heritage; for staging historical narratives on both grand and local scales; and for outlining the historical evolution of a people or nation, a city or region, or a particular tradition in ideas, values, or manufacture. Not a few traditions which came to be taken as extending back into the mists of time were nineteenth-century fabrications. 16

If an artefact could be presumed, consistently and reliably, to reflect or in some way embody individual and collective attitudes, values, or desires, then, as a historical document and as a relic of specific times, places, or peoples, it might be put together with stylistically related others as components or building-blocks in the construction of an image of national character, or as an event in the ongoing evolutionary adventure of a people or nation. Each artefact might be staged as an episode in the unfolding story of a people's progress, or as a solution to a linked series of aesthetic or technological problems, in a chain of events and inventions whose product or outcome was our own present, our modernity. At the same time, the artefact or art work might be staged as an object of some desire, as a window opening on to some moment or period in the life of an individual or nation, or as an occasion for meditation or contemplation.

As the notion of art came to be an instrument for the study of all peoples, so too did its institutionalized discourse, art history, come to serve as a pragmatic modern concordance of ethics, aesthetics, ethnology, and social and political history. In any case, what was essential in the fabrication of such cultural 'histories' was the delineation of causal relationships which might be seen to exist between the (quite literally) millions of artefacts from all over the world being collected together in Europe since the sixteenth century, and amassed in both public and private spaces, and multiplied in countless reproductions and illustrations increasingly circulated around the world.

This construction of cultural histories entailed a massive labour of classification on the part of generations of art historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries aimed at fixing in place the exact interrelations of all this artefactual material, to permit the writing of narrative scenarios of

affiliation, influence, and stylistic descent. The relationship of these objects (and by extension of the peoples they represented) to the shape and condition of modernity (that is, the European present) was what was centrally at stake in these developments.

In this modern enterprise of rendering visual objects legible or meaningful, the past was coming to be staged as a preamble and prologue to the present, and thus as an object of genealogical desire: that from which the properly socialized modern citizen might learn to desire his or her descent. To leave Europe was, quite simply and literally, to enter the past—a past represented by peoples at various (earlier) stages of social and cultural evolution.

The history of this movement in public education began in earnest in the early nineteenth century in every European country; by the end of the century, it had spread to many parts of the world connected to Europe politically and economically. It entailed many disparate forms of increasingly systematized modes of observation, analysis, interpretation, display, explanation, and instruction. The academic disciplines of art history, archaeology, history, and anthropology were explicitly designed to function within such a social environment, and both to service and define its needs.

Objectives of this book

The reconstructed worlds of Mycenaean Greece, Minoan Crete, and the Bronze Age Aegean Basin were initially staged within the analytic and interpretative frameworks just outlined. A century later, while a good deal of the stage machinery has been dismantled or put into shadow or storage, the stage itself remains largely intact (if somewhat extended), although (as we shall see) new forms of theatre have begun to evolve. This book is one such restaging or retelling. It is organized in the following manner.

Programmatically, this book has two principal objectives.

In the first place, Aegean Art and Architecture is written with the understanding that the visual and material cultures of a society including what in modern terms might be referred to as its 'art' and architecture'-constitute forms of individual and social technologies or instruments for the active construction, maintenance, and transformation of individual and social realities. The visual or material culture of the Bronze Age Aegean-and here a useful generic term might be simply the built environment-will be understood as encompassing the broad range of objects and artefacts of all kinds as well as their changing spatial and temporal interrelationships: pots, paintings, gemstones, buildings, furniture, graves; artefacts both portable and fixed in space and place.

Our aim is to avoid framing this artefactual world as simply the passive reflection, trace, or residue of ideas, attitudes, or mentalities presumed to somehow pre-exist their material expression. Rather, this book attempts to articulate the built environments of the prehistoric Aegean region as simultaneously constitutive and reflective-as much instruments that function to fabricate and maintain social realities as themselves products of such ongoing and dynamically changing realities. At any given place and time there will most likely coexist both older and newer, locally produced and imported, artefacts, styles, and practices-a situation which in no small measure problematizes the construction of social-historical chronologies based on the sequencing of single genres or styles.

One motivation for such a perspective concerns the relationships envisioned between the reader and interpreter in the present-both the authors of this volume as well as its readers-and our objects of study. We position ourselves in a sense midway between two antithetical modern or modernist perspectives on the 'reading' of objects from the

past.

On the one hand is a position which holds that the meanings of an object are fixed in place forever as the imprint of the 'intentions' of their makers-rather like the geomagnetic properties of a pot fired at a particular time and place, which are perpetually retained. Here, the task of the modern interpreter, art historian, or archaeologist is to read, deduce, or extract such intentions (its original 'built-in properties') from the particular object itself. Such deductions might then be taken to constitute a reconstruction of those original meanings and intentions. Often this perspective is extended to incorporate contemporary 'contextual' meanings or functions of an object-the object thus constituting a 'text' and its circumstances of production and reception, with usage making up its complementary or supplementary milieu or 'con-text'.

In either case, this position privileges the object (and/or its context) as the only legitimate source of the object's meaning, and it situates the reader or interpreter, whether art historian or archaeologist, as one whose task is to articulate and give voice, as far as possible, to that (often hidden or deeply embedded) meaning. Such a perspective relies for its plausibility upon an underlying, and frequently unvoiced (and distinctively modern), model or metaphor of communication, wherein the archaeological object is construed as a 'medium' of communication or expression of ideas or values on the part of its maker (or, by extension, of the maker's society at large), which the user or viewer is challenged to decipher or decode by attending closely to the object. (The perspective also validates the professional role and social function of the trained analyst, art historian, connoisseur, or collector, who then serves a wider audience as sanctioned interpreter.)

The nature of this analytic perspective may be brought into sharper focus by considering its opposite-the notion that the meaning of an object is entirely or largely in the eyes and imagination of its beholders or users. Once again, as with the first perspective, this position has a certain degree of plausibility, given the range of meanings, connotations, functions, or uses that any artefact might be subject to by those who use them. Precisely because of the (relative) object-permanence of artefacts or art works, they remain to be used and reused, and thought about in potentially new and possibly quite unforeseen or unintended ways over time-unlike a spoken utterance, which materially disappears unless it is recorded.

The position taken by this book constitutes in one sense an

alternative to this epistemological opposition which holds that the meaning or significance of an artefact must be either entirely embodied in (and reconstructable primarily from) the object itself, or primarily in the perception of the object's users or viewers. By granting a degree of plausibility to both interpretative perspectives, we acknowledge the existence of an artefact's original intentions and functions, while holding that these intended meanings may not be fully reconstructable from the object itself or from any seemingly complete reconstruction of its material contexts. It also allows for the possibility of multiple or even conflicting intentions and meanings for a given object, even in its original historical situations, and for the coexistence, at the same time and place, of conflicting or alternative styles and attitudes.

At the same time, we acknowledge the historical situation that the uses and understandings of an artefact are subject to change and transformation over time, and that the object's significance is a complex function of the interactions between it and its (potentially very varied) users, including ourselves, rather than constituting any one permanently fixed meaning, transcending every environment and situation in which the object is encountered, as was once canonically assumed to be the case in the majority of twentieth-century art history survey textbooks, or in mass-market art books, or in the protocols of modern art criticism.

In short, our aim is to open up the field and range of meanings of the Aegean built world so as to appreciate the dynamic and changing nature of the meanings and functions of artefacts in their original historical environments, as well as in the object's relationship to ourselves and the ways in which (for example) Minoan artefacts function for us in the modern world as instruments for the construction of historical narratives about origins, evolution, and European cultural heritage.

Underlying all perspectives on 'how things mean' will always be found sets of specific metaphors, or ideological and epistemological positions, on 'where' the meaning or significance of an object is imagined to lie relative to the form of the object, the mentalities of its maker(s) or of the maker's society at large at a given time or place, and the stance and attitudes of the viewer or user contemporary with the object or subsequently, after a generation or (as here in this book) after 3,000 to 5,000 years. The notion that meaning is the content of a form, with a concrete locus is, once again, a particularly modern perspective, and a consequence of a very specific (and very specifically modern) system of visual metaphors. Once again, a

sensitivity to the underlying metaphorical substrate of our own interpretative vocabularies may serve to open up the possibilities of viable alternative readings as well as the varied functions such readings may have in the present.

A second principal aim of Aegean Art and Architecture is to avoid fabricating the kind of idealized continuous narrative history of the Aegean that has hitherto characterized the bulk not only of art historical but also of archaeological reconstructive writing. By this is meant that the use of a set of stylistically associated material remains as a surrogate for (or as emblematic of) societies and peoples themselves and their historical developments. In other words, we seek to avoid using what might be typologically constructed as the evolution of artefact styles as a simple or direct reflection of some imagined or projected parallel evolution of social mores, ethical progress, or cognitive advancement. In this, our project runs counter to the prevailing thrust of art historical (and archaeological) practice in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. AegeanArtandArchitecture is not a historical novel.

Here we take a position on the writing of histories which acknowledges the possible existence at times of consistent and coherent stylistic trajectories in the chronological development of Aegean built environments, but does not claim that any such stylistic developments are necessarily wholly reflective or representative of broader social events and developments. Such a position follows from our acknowledgement that the actual constitution of a built environment at any point in time will be a melange-often quite complex-of coexisting objects of different origins in space and time, and associated with potentially contrary and distinct stylistic, philosophical, or ideological tendencies. In this respect, the unilinear evolution of styles of artefacts is more often than not an idealized art historical fiction, and a reflex of very particular needs and desires for the fabrication of coherent national or ethnic identities in the modern world.

The perspective taken here is intended to call attention to the fact that any such idealized narrative history abstracted from a formatted system of artefacts stylistically linked together over time is grounded in the assumption of direct and reflective relationships between a built environment and a people. This assumption, as indicated above, is a specifically modern aesthetic perspective on meaning and expression that is historically rooted in the image of the nation state as a metaphor for the ideal individual (and vice versa).

Discussing all of these perspectives is intended here to highlight the fundamental fact that the past is constructed and `read' or made sense of in and for the present. The complex relationships between past and present are central to any society's fabrication of its identities and missions-whether four millennia ago or today.

Organization of the book

Instead of separating objects into discrete categories, Aegean Art and Architecture is organized chronologically (according to significant historical periods of social and cultural development) to focus upon a wide variety of objects (from sealstones to pots to buildings and settlements) in the three major geographical areas (Crete, mainland Greece, and the Cycladic islands in the Aegean) which in current understanding constituted relatively distinct cultural zones or spheres during the Bronze Age.

Rather than comprising an exhaustive survey of many archaeological sites (there are in fact hundreds on Crete alone, and the Bronze Age remains uncovered throughout the Aegean Basin number in the thousands), the book will examine in some detail particular settlements whose remains, given the current state of archaeological knowledge, seem to us to be characteristic of a period or place. Because the book is intended as an introduction to the built environments of the Bronze Age Aegean, for those with little or no previous knowledge of the subject, emphasis is placed on widely known and better-documented structures, paintings, and portable objects, with an occasional glimpse of more recent, but lesser-known and important discoveries, both in the Aegean and elsewhere.

Our choice of sites, and the scope of the study, is necessarily constrained by two factors. First, the size and format of the book are predetermined, being specifically designed to serve as one text in an organized series of Oxford History of Art books intended as general introductions to the art and architecture of the world. The book presupposes little or no familiarity with the subject, and is designed to provide any reader with the necessary resources for further study of an advanced or detailed nature. Aegean Art and Architecture, in other words, is what it explicitly declares itself to be: an introduction to the subject.

Secondly, our choice of material is constrained by the nature of the existing knowledge (very fragmentary) and published coverage (often astonishingly spotty) of various periods and places. Thus, while very little may be known about Minoan burial practices in the Second Palace Period, Mycenaean evidence is plentiful. Some sites have been thoroughly excavated but only summarily published (if at all: the amount of material to be processed remains staggering, given obvious limitations of resources and personnel relative to the size of the task). For some periods, architectural remains are still virtually non-existent,

while ceramic remains are plentiful. The sites discussed here were selected because they were thought to be most useful in introducing the reader to the possible ways in which objects may have functioned in their original environments. A variety of possible scenarios of interpretation will be given, introducing the reader to some of the underlying assumptions and hypotheses which have governed interpretation during the modern history of discovery and exploration in the Aegean.

This book is designed, above all, to serve as a pragmatic instrument for learning about various aspects of this truly remarkable period and region, and as an introduction to the field which links up programmatically with more specialized and focused studies. A special bibliography and guides for further study of particular topics will be found at the end of the book. At the same time, footnotes and other reference materials will direct the reader to other related subjects, and they will also serve to introduce explanations of particular images or structures which differ from some of those put forward here.

Each chapter is organized chronologically, and the discussions for each period emphasize the design, uses, meanings, and formal developments (if any) of images, buildings, and other artefacts. When feasible, regional variation in style, use, and workmanship will be examined, as well as evidence for the local and regional dissemination of objects, forms of design practice, and approaches to the organization of social space. Comparative examinations will be made, where possible, of contemporary artistic and cultural practices in the Aegean and Anatolia, Cyprus, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, as well as the evidence for interconnections at various periods.

The schematic chronology of the Aegean Bronze Age at the beginning of this book (see p. 8) also provides the terminology used in the book for various periods and regional variations. The absolute dates of many of the periods named therein are a matter of some (in some cases very great) controversy, and have been so for much of the twentieth century, but the relative chronologies should prove to be a reliably useful guide for our discussions." The period covered here—some two and a half thousand years—begins in the Neolithic or New Stone Age, before c.3300 BCE, and ends in the Early Iron Age, c.1000 BCE.

The next chapter looks at the Neolithic Period in Greece and the Prepalatial Early Bronze Age, and is divided into presentations of settlements and burial practices. The Neolithic settlement at Dimini in Thessaly is examined in some detail as an introduction to themes of

artistic production and art historical interpretation recurring throughout the book. In southern Crete, the Early Bronze Age settlement at Myrtilos, Fournou Korifi has been the subject of recent extensive study, and has yielded important knowledge about Early Minoan social and economic life; the site of Vasiliki in eastern Crete has yielded traces of frescoes and of building technologies which continue to develop in later periods. On the mainland, the important settlement at Lerna in the Argolid is examined in detail and we will look at its architecture and sealings archive. The second part of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of burial practices in the three geographical regions and the finds associated with Early Bronze Age burial, including gold objects and marble figurines.

Chapter 3 examines the First Palace Period of the Middle Bronze Age on Crete and in Greece. The first section looks at the development of the so-called 'palaces' at important Minoan settlements such as Phaistos, with its significant ceramic remains, well-preserved and documented architecture, sealings archive, and unique objects such as the undeciphered pictographic Phaistos disk. Other buildings discussed are the imposing administrative compounds at Mallia, Quartier Mu, and at Monastiraki; the unique circular hilltop building at Chamaizi; and the walled site of Ayia Photia in east Crete. The second section discusses the vernacular building traditions of Crete and the mainland, and the final part of the chapter is devoted to ritual practices in the west courts at Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia; and to a discussion of frescoes, figurines, and the peak sanctuary at Petsophas.

Chapter 4 focuses upon the Second Palace Period on Crete, in the islands and on the mainland. It examines in turn: public art and the so-called 'palatial style' in architecture at larger and smaller settlements, as well as recent discoveries which have called into question older distinctions between building types; the question of Cretan and mainland spheres of influence in the Cycladic islands, on Kea, and at Akrotiri on Thera, which is important for the state of preservation of its buildings and fresco paintings; religious practices, shrines, and sacred caves and their associated finds; and, finally, burial practices, notably the shaft graves at Mycenae.

Chapter 5 examines the question of Mycenaean domination and the Minoan tradition by looking closely at continuity and change in the arts, and in burial practices. The first section discusses the carefully documented Mycenaean palace compound at Pylos; the Mycenaean phase of the palace at Knossos and the continuation of the Minoan fresco traditions; the Mycenaean stoa at Hagia Triadha; and the shipsheds at the nearby port of Kommos. The second part of the

chapter looks at the monumentalizing of burial practices at Mycenae, and at the Treasury of Atreus tholos tomb; the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, with its painted offering scenes that have fuelled speculation by generations of scholars about Minoan religious or philosophical beliefs; the Mycenaean shrine at the town of Phylakopi on the island of Melos; and the circuit walls of Mycenae and Tiryns.

The final chapter, 'Disruptions, (Dis)Continuities and the Bronze Age Legacy', examines evidence for the survival of the Aegean world in later Greek history, and discusses artefacts, technologies, religion, and public ceremony. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to the eastward migration of Aegean traditions, and discusses Hittites and Mycenaeans at Miletus/Millawanda on the west coast of Anatolia; and what has been called an 'international style' in portable artefacts circulating throughout the Mediterranean. The second part considers the modern tradition of speculation about Bronze Age artefacts that appear to foreshadow practices familiar in Greek social and religious life. Several sites are examined closely to shed light on these issues: Kavousi, Kato Syme, and Lato on Crete, and Kea in the Cyclades. In addition, the Bronze Age heritage of later Greek sanctuaries is examined.

The final part-'Daedalus returns to Crete'-is a brief survey of the Iron Age legacy within Greece of the arts and technologies of the Bronze Age Aegean that find their way back to Greece from the Near East after the cultural hiatus and social and political disruptions at the end of the Bronze Age. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ways in which the discovery and continued exploration of the cultural remains of Minoan Crete, Mycenaean Greece, and the Cyclades has challenged (and continues to challenge) not only Eurocentrist notions about the originary properties of Hellenic art, but also fundamental assumptions regarding art and art history themselves."

In this regard, Arthur Evans may have been prescient in his observations of 1909, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that the discoveries in Crete had 'more than an archaeological interest' in that they 'must affect the mental attitude of ... future generations in many departments of knowledge'-even if these effects have gone much farther, historically, methodologically, or theoretically, than either he or anyone else could have predicted a century ago.



The Neolithic Period and the Prepalatial Early Bronze Age

2

We shall find that the past as it was is not what comes at the end of the trip; we are on a return ticket.

Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley,
Reconstructing Archaeology, p. i5

Settlements

Two tales of one city: the context of interpretation and the interpretation of context at Neolithic Dimini

The agriculturally rich plains of Thessaly in northern Greece was a probable location for where an 'urban revolution' in Neolithic Greece took place. An important site of this revolution was Dimini-a small settlement that included a large central building with a courtyard on top of a little hill, surrounded by smaller houses or activity areas on the slope, and enclosed by a series of stone ring walls [7]. The central building is made up of a large rectangular hall with a hearth and four columns supporting the roof. This room is entered from the outside by way of a forehall and a porch [8].

Modern scholars have commonly referred to such a structure as a megaron, which is the Greek word for hall, the term evoking images of the heroic world of Homeric poetry. The settlement dates to the period known as Late Neolithic III-IV (c.3700-3300 acE). Dimini served as Greece's earliest example of a modest town planning scheme. The remains constitute the largest corpus of excavated, preserved architectural remains from the Greek Neolithic Period. Previous interpretations of this settlement from the early and late twentieth century provide examples of how different methodological frameworks affect our modern understanding of the past.

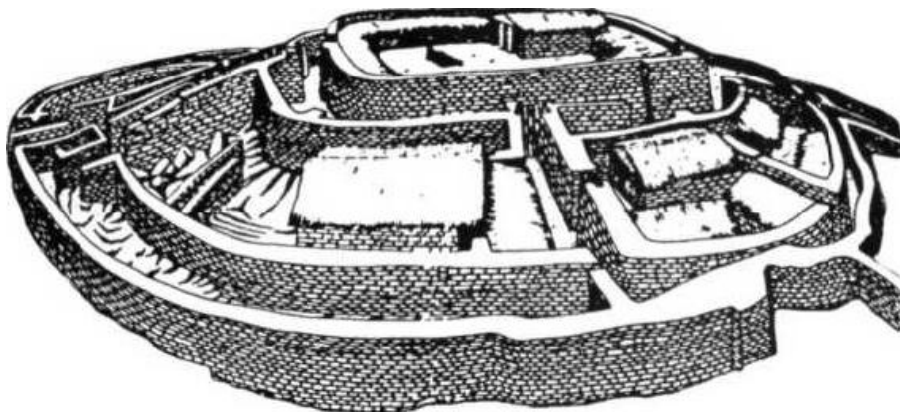
Dimini was originally excavated in the early 1900s by the prominent Greek archaeologist Christos Tsountas.' As a means of trying to

understand the significance of our fragmentary past, historians often turn to the use of models. These models can be derived from many sources, including the literary testaments of other cultures, patterns derived from the observation of history, and analogies or comparisons with traditional cultures that have survived into the present. Tsountas, for example, used the Homeric epic poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey, as models for interpreting the meaning and social organization of the settlement at Dimini. Based on these, he reconstructed the central building on top of the hill as a splendid palace or hall where a king lived among his riches. He believed that this palace would have been surrounded by extensive fortifications some 3 m high to which supplementary fortifications were added after a violent destruction.

Detail of 12

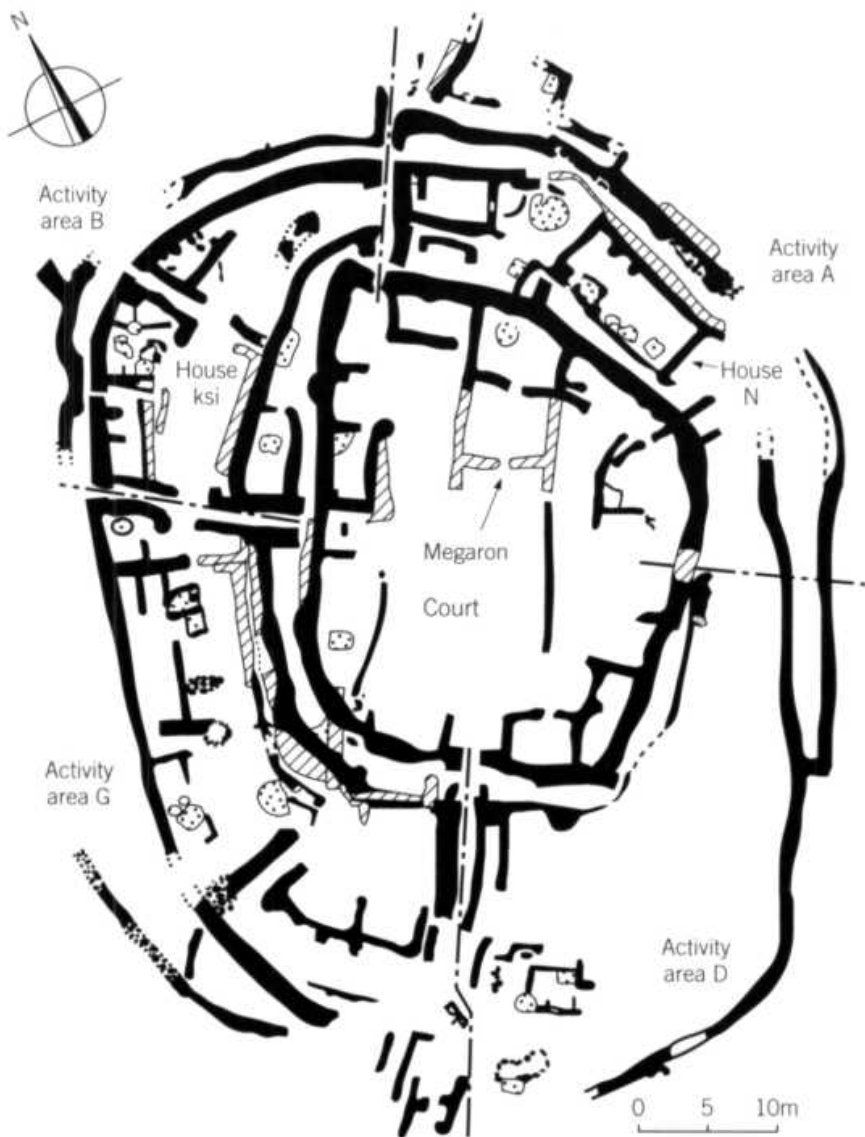
7

Reconstruction of the Late Neolithic site of Dimini in Thessaly, looking east, c.3700-3300 BCE. Dimini is important for its evidence of an 'urban revolution' in Neolithic Greece. This reconstruction shows the prominent position of the large central building on top of the hill, overlooking other smaller buildings lower down on the hillside.



8

Plan of the settlement of Dimini. The plan shows houses and activity areas during various levels of occupation in the Neolithic Period.



Dimini was re-excavated in the 1970s by the archaeologist George Chourmouziadis.² In contrast to Tsountas, Chourmouziadis used the writings of Karl Marx and an approach known as systems theory as his interpretative models. The use of systems theory involves analysing a culture as a system that can be broken down into a series of subsystems or subunits.; Marxist analysis places an emphasis on the study of economic production of the necessities of life to explain the mechanisms of social change or the internal nature of a given social order, which are taken as directly reflective of systems of production. The economic bases of social existence are seen as the major generative influence on a group's belief system. For example, the focus

of religion on the nurturing powers of a Great Goddess might be read as an emphasis on fertility, that is, human, animal, and agricultural production and reproduction, in sustaining the life of the society.

At any rate, Chourmouziadis interpreted Dimini quite differently from Tsountas. He saw the settlement as a series of household systems working in cooperation with each other to meet the needs of the settlement until such time as the 'owners' of the large central building or megaron instituted a system of private property. Chourmouziadis assumed that the people of Dimini had once lived in a state of primitive communism in which the resources of the community were shared equally-a system later shattered by social and economic circumstances reflected in the construction of the megaron.

The notion of a new imbalance in social ranking after the appearance of the megaron is based on the fact that it is strikingly larger and situated in a more prominent (central and physically higher) position than the other structures in the settlement. The hypothesis is metaphoric in nature in that it assumes a structural or visual similarity between the physical characteristics of the great house in relation to its environment of smaller structures and a social system of greater or lesser power and rank. Chourmouziadis believed that the changes that brought this about were the natural result of increased population and economic output, so that the central court became the 'private property' of the 'owners' of the megaron. Social change or economic development would have taken place through the mobilization of production by a central authority.

There was a certain amount of cogency in Chourmouziadis' assumptions. His description of the site, however, was generic and schematic, making it difficult to evaluate his interpretation, or to reconstruct the steps that he took to arrive at it. Without a detailed description of the architecture or the context of the finds, his publication of the site remains shrouded in mystery.

Chourmouziadis' interpretations regarding the formation of a precapitalist society at Dimini relied on a series of assumptions concerning the organization of the site, the functioning of its economy, the evolution of ideas in the study of prehistory, general historical theories concerning the relationships between individuals and society, and the presence of what he calls a 'natural' economy. He believed that such an economy afforded no possibilities of wealth that might provoke aggressive manifestations on the part of neighbouring communities. His view of early Dimini as a precapitalist paradise evoked a sense of nostalgia not fundamentally different from Tsountas'

view of the site as a Homeric citadel three-quarters of a century earlier.

The juxtaposition of two competing interpretations of Dimini by two prominent archaeologists highlights the reconstruction of art historical narrative and discourse as an ongoing and multilayered process that is subject to diverse modern social, historical, cultural, and institutional influences. Many different models and types of description are often employed in the study of prehistory (the term itself was first used in 1851) including narration, quantification, and graphic and historiographic reconstruction.

Any approach to the study of the past is a theory of the past and of historical development and evolution. Prehistorians work from a world view that was formulated in the present although they might be trying to understand the world view of peoples of the distant past. Theories of prehistory are powerfully shaped by contemporary social and institutional circumstances and agendas, so that what constitutes significant historical evidence of the past for art historians will differ, often markedly, from what archaeologists or anthropologists judge important in the task of reconstructing ancient societies. The interpretative frameworks or theoretical and methodological perspectives from which the past is reconstituted, moreover, are themselves evolving.

Different temporal frameworks also play an important role in how we approach the past. In some instances, a scholar might be more concerned with recording and sometimes analysing a series of historical events, changing cultural processes, or changing styles (sometimes called a diachronic approach). In other instances, a scholar might choose to focus on a particular moment in time and study the context of monuments and art works, conceptual structures such as cult or economy, or the relationship of the individual to society: a more synchronic approach.

Consider again the evidence from Dimini and the archaeological context of its monuments. As mentioned above, the site is dominated by a large central building, the megaron, composed of a large hall with a horseshoe-shaped hearth that is roughly centred, with four columns supporting the roof as indicated by extant post holes. The hall is connected to a forehall and smaller porch by a series of centrally placed doorways. It has been suggested that this porch was a later addition from the Final Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. A side room abutting the rear hall of the megaron probably functioned as a storage annexe. The central building is fronted by a court and

surrounded by a series of smaller, single-room, rectangular buildings containing a variety of internal features. Other types of installations such as pottery kilns are also distributed on the hill.

Of the smaller rectangular rooms arranged around the edge of the court, about half contained undecorated pots for the storage of commodities. The other half contained decorated pots as well as figurines and jewellery. Traces of fire and burning were found in rooms from both groups. Such distinctions indicate that different structures had different functions or that households used more than one structure.

These smaller constructions were dubbed 'activity areas' by Chourmouziadis and 'houses' by others. They are arranged on the lower parts of a gently sloping hill and are enclosed by a series of ring walls known as periboloi. The disparities in size and arrangement of the buildings in the settlement indicated to him some form of social hierarchy taking the form of asymmetrical or unequal relations between the occupant(s) of the larger structure and those assumed to occupy the smaller buildings around it.

Rather than the grand and romantic Homeric fortifications imagined by Tsountas, it is more likely that the periboloi encircling the settlement served as retaining walls that provided support for the construction of the buildings. The reason is that at little more than a metre high and 1.5 m thick, these stone walls in themselves would not have served effectively to keep anyone in or out of the settlement. Of six of these periboloi, only three are complete. They are arranged in pairs and pierced by doorways at regular intervals which served to organize and define the settlement by dividing it into quarters. Along with several structures within the uppermost enclosure wall, they also serve to define the central court. It is not inconceivable that they may have served to deploy some sort of traffic or processional scheme. At the very least they would orchestrate communication between different parts of the mound, at times channelling movement towards particular parts of the hill while at other times denying access to other areas.

Among the smaller houses or activity areas between the periboloi is House N. Located to the northeast and behind the megaron between two of the periboloi, it is a small rectangular structure that contained storage and food-processing areas as suggested by a bin, a mortar, and carbonized grain. It also contained steatopygous female figurines not unlike the one illustrated here [9]. The term *steatopygous* is often used in reference to female Neolithic figurines rendered with a high

concentration of fat deposits in the lower regions of the body. They are often depicted squatting or seated with very schematic facial features that in some instances contrasts with a greater degree of naturalism in the rendering of animals. Incised or painted designs on some of these figurines (in the form of zigzags, chevrons, parallel lines, lozenges, and spirals) might represent clothing, jewellery, or body parts such as the pubic triangle indicated in this figure. Whether male or female, such figurines often emphasize the reproductive organs as well.

Interpreting them from the particular kind of materialist perspective discussed above, Chourmouziadis saw these figurines as representing biological and social functions in a deification of the human. Other scholars have interpreted them as entirely religious,' placing different types of female figurines in different stages in the life cycle of a goddess as youthful, slender, mature, or pregnant, as vessel, bird, or a symbol of regeneration. More recent studies have rejected such interpretations as arbitrary and simplistic,' preferring to consider a range of possible meanings across a spectrum of modern categories from the religious to the decorative that change depending on the context of the figurine and its modelling and marking.

Within such a scheme, a plurality of meanings, termed polysemic or multivalent, might be possible for a single figurine during its period of circulation within different social contexts. Although the breasts, belly, and hips of the figurine depicted here are exaggerated, the features of the face are rendered schematically with an appearance that one might even plausibly term 'phallic'. An incorporation of male and female characteristics into a single figurine might be seen as a powerful symbol of life-giving power distinct from certain modern dualisms of male versus female. The context of the Dimini figurines is taken up again below.

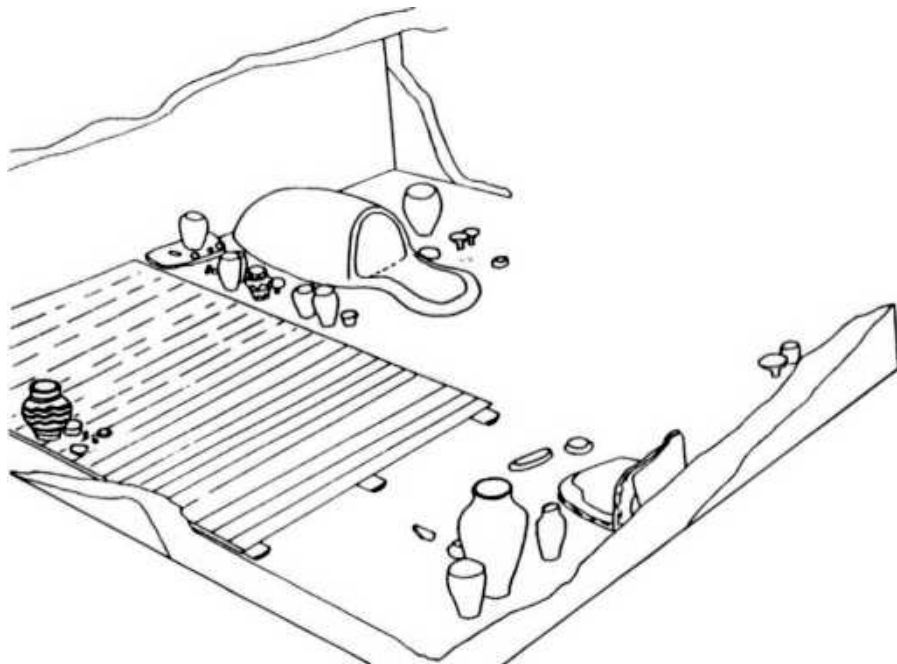
9

Seated Middle Neolithic female figurine in clay, region of Pharsala, fifth millennium BCE. Figurines of this type have been interpreted in various ways, from religious to decorative. Note the seated position, the large breasts, belly and hips, and the schematic features of the face.



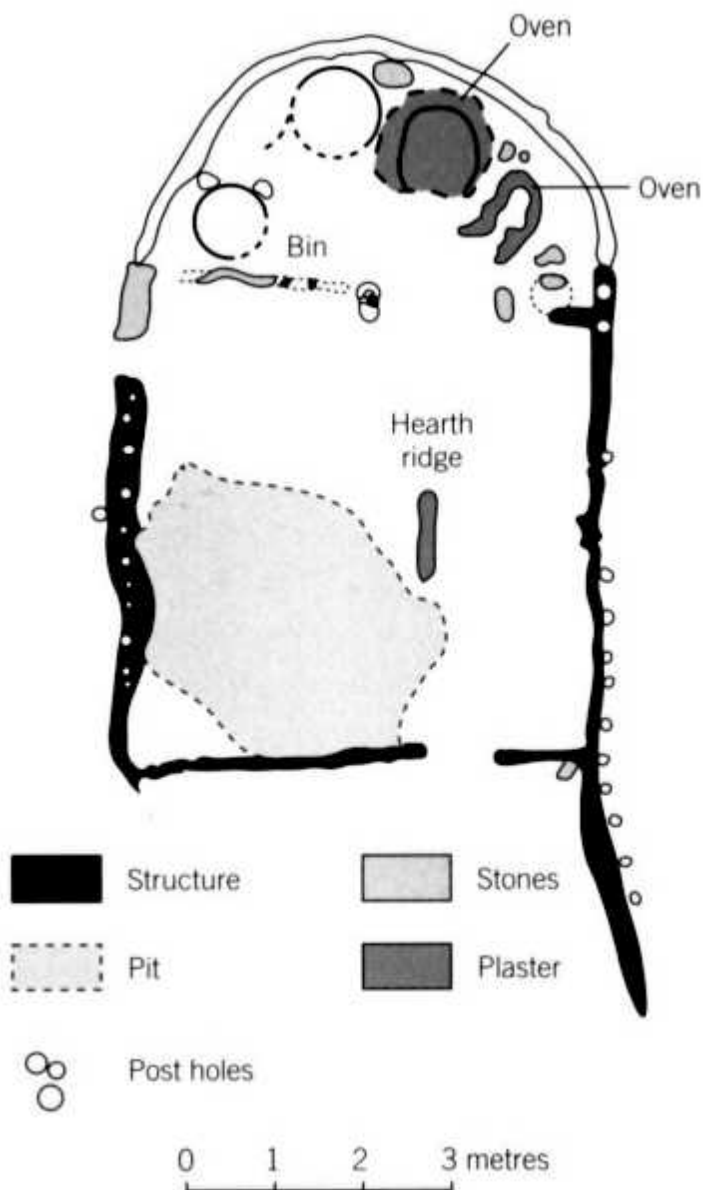
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Interior layout of a typical Neolithic room, showing a clay-covered hearth inside.



Simplified plan of the 'Burnt' House from Sitagroi, Late Neolithic.

Note: plans and diagrams are shown with North at the top of the page unless otherwise indicated.



Spherical vase from Dimini, Late Neolithic. The combination of spirals, curved lines, and polygons decorating the vase are characteristic of Late Neolithic pottery.

House Ksi on the site is similarly located to the northwest of the megaron in activity

area B. It too contained areas devoted to storage and food processing as well as a large circular hearth, and sunken areas in which to place storage jars. This area also included Houses 7-9 which contained storage jars.

House (activity area) G, located within the southwest portion of the same periboloi, contained two connected clay hearths, a kiln containing a large quantity of pottery and areas devoted to food processing and storage as indicated by stone tools and carbonized seeds and grain. The placement of a pottery kiln in one building but not in others provides scholars with an important clue to understanding the social organization of the people who lived at Dimini. The fact that certain areas are given over to certain types of activities indicates division of labour, craft specialization, and cooperation in the carrying out of the routines of daily life. The coordination of these different activities would lead to social complexity and hierarchy through the purposeful organization of collaborative effort among members of the community. Constructing particular features that are used in common by all of the inhabitants such as the periboloi also implies a certain level of social cooperation.

Many of the Dimini structures contained hearths made of stones that were possibly coated with clay [10, 11]. Bins constructed out of stone slabs, and pits coated with clay, served as storage areas. Children were buried beneath house floors, replicating a practice that has been found in Neolithic settlements in the Near East. The climate of the region, which today includes frequent rainy weather, has led scholars to conclude that the roofs at Dimini were slanted or gabled with a covering of clay and reeds.

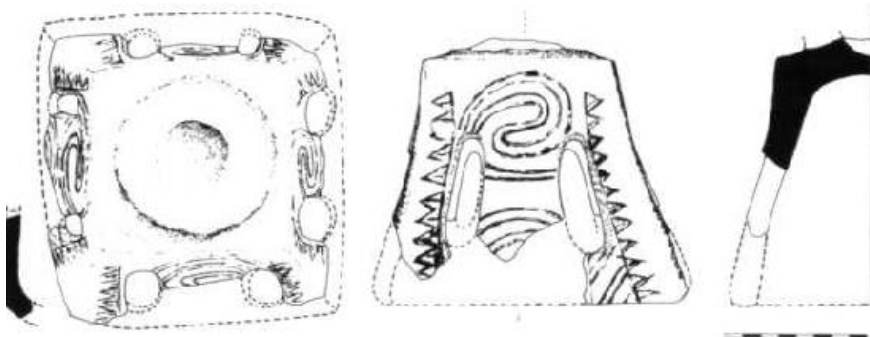
Space on the hill appears to have been organized around the processing and storage of food, and the production of stone and bone tools and pottery. The tools included axes, grinders, chisels, millstones, sickles, scrapers, borers, blades, and spatulas. The most frequently attested pottery shapes from Dimini tend to be bowls, strainers, and ladles that are found in kitchen areas and storage jars found elsewhere. Common design elements include complex repeated geometric patterns marked, in later designs, by use of the curve in combination with squares, lines, and polygons; this may be seen in a spherical vase from Dimini [12]. Clay was also used for spindle whorls and loomweights which were used in the production of textiles.`

A general similarity of styles can be found in the pottery designs of northern Greece such as found at the sites of Sitagroi and Dikili Tash in the Drama plain.⁷ Northern pottery is, however, distinctive for its use of graphite paint which gives the designs a metallic lustre as represented in the graphite-painted pyramidal stand from Sitagroi [13]. Other distinctive designs include spiral meanders, straight and curvilinear lines, and pendant circles distinctively rendered in black paint on a red ground or with incisions infilled with a white paste 1141.



13

Pyramidal stand from Sitagroi, Late Neolithic. The metallic lustre of the design was achieved through the use of graphite paint, common to much of the Late Neolithic pottery from northern Greece.



It is important to note that the mound at Dimini which serves as the

focus of this discussion only constitutes 10 per cent of a site which appears to have included simple dwellings in the surrounding lowlands. The mound itself may have functioned as a centre for the production of manufactured goods, the exchange of foodstuffs for such goods, and the performance of ritual for the strengthening of communal bonds with the bulk of the inhabitants living elsewhere.

It has already been pointed out that recent studies of this site have emphasized economic functions and the provision of facilities for production to the near exclusion of other aspects of social and cultural phenomena. Recently, archaeologist Ian Hodder has suggested that the construction of large Neolithic settlements actually pre-dates the domestication of animals and the adoption of settled agriculture, a situation which, if correct, would problematize an economic model of interpretation such as that mentioned above. Hodder believed that there was a symbolic aspect to domestication that was embodied in the house or domus (a 'female' domain) so that domestication becomes a symbolically powerful metaphor for a materially pragmatic taming (domination) of the wild.

The practice of storage itself might plausibly be seen as simultaneously incorporating symbolic and utilitarian components which may well have been unknown or unrecognizable to modern 'readers'. The practice of storage is closely bound up with notions of gender and domestication. Hodder attempted to develop a body of applied theory for the study of the long-term duration of symbolic structures. He identified over time in the Neolithic Period an increasing control of storage brought within the idiom and metaphor of the domus (which is the Latin word for house) in society.^s He broadly defined the domus to include not just the house but also the activities carried out within the home; the house's life-world, so to speak.¹ He related household activities to the economic strategies of survival and power relations in the European Neolithic, and contrasted the domus to the agrios.

Agrios is a term used abstractly with reference to the outside, the wild, the world of the hunt, that can be contrasted to the cultured, nurturing, and domesticated world of the home. Domus and agrios, then, would be relative and complementary terms, manifesting a potentially very wide variety of material forms and expressions in visual artefacts and settlement organization.

Within such a theoretical perspective, then, the presence of female figurines in the Neolithic domus could be linked to a wide range of domestic activities including cooking and the storage (dominance) of

grain. In this respect, there might be a strong link between women, food production, and storage. As part of this constellation of activities, storage becomes a gendered activity associated with nourishment and productivity.

14

Late Neolithic pottery types from Sitagroi, with a variety of common designs, such as spirals and straight and curvilinear lines.

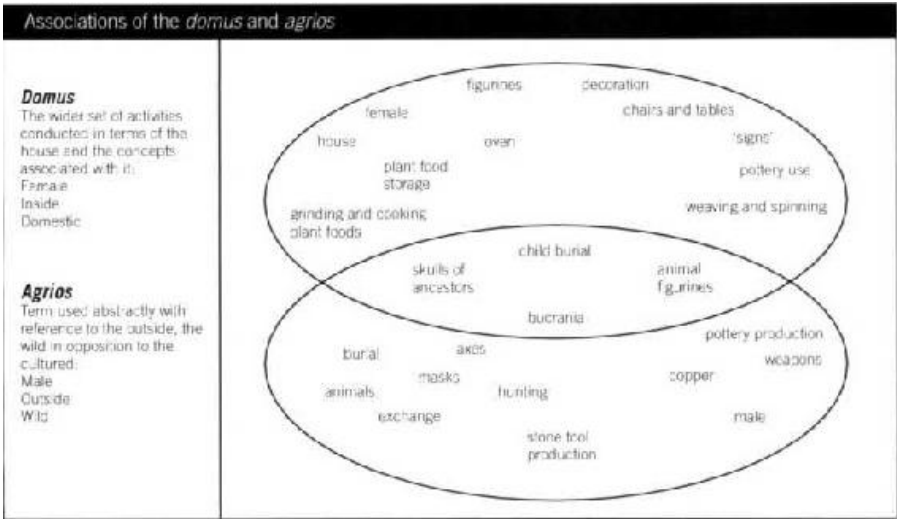


Whether we choose to emphasize economic production or the symbolic expressions of domestication, it is clear from the absence of monumental religious structures, the presence of figurines, and the existence of infant burial within the nurturing confines of the home that religious belief may not have been distinct from daily experience in the modern sense of a binary opposition between sacred and secular activities.

It is unclear whether the making of house models such as the one

seen here [151 from Thessaly with a chequerboard motif represents a factual representation of a Neolithic house. Yet their very existence suggests a certain interest in symbolically representing the house, perhaps as an emblem of the beliefs, activities, personalities, and productions of a life-world." It is interesting to note that this practice does not seem to continue in later Bronze Age Greece although it continues to occur both in Crete and in the Near East.

This brief survey of several key features of the visual culture of the Greek Neolithic, and of our modern constructions and interpretations of it should provide an example of how the past is something that is written in and into the present. Tsountas wrote a history of the Neolithic that mirrored a romantic nostalgia for a heroic Hellenic past as described in Homeric epics and other poems. Chourmouziadis created a distinct idealized past that evoked a picture of a precapitalist paradise of communal equalities and balance. He supported his interpretation of the evidence using science (as embodied in systems theory) and Marxist ideology as a means of legitimizing his claims.



Clay model of a house from Thessaly, Middle Neolithic, decorated with a painted chequerboard motif.



It is important to remember as we read the past, that it is written about and represented to the public by individuals living in the present. Furthermore, we construct our past and our present in relationship to each other so that choosing a past also implies or suggests choosing a likely or desirable future. Consider the appropriateness of terms such as ownership, private property, megaron, goddess, or religion with regard to these very ancient societies, remembering that these are relatively modern terms being projected on to the distant past: the component parts of a theory of history and of historical evolution.

The Early Bronze Age Greek mainland

There is no uniform pattern to the spatial organization of buildings in the Aegean Basin during the Neolithic Period. In most areas, habitation sites consisted of one or more rooms with shared walls, often with many such spaces added together. When structures occur in isolation, they tend to be mostly squarish, with a protected entryway created by extending one wall beyond another, in the manner of what early excavators called a 'but-and-ben' type of construction,

characteristic of simple sheep or cattle enclosures in the British Isles.

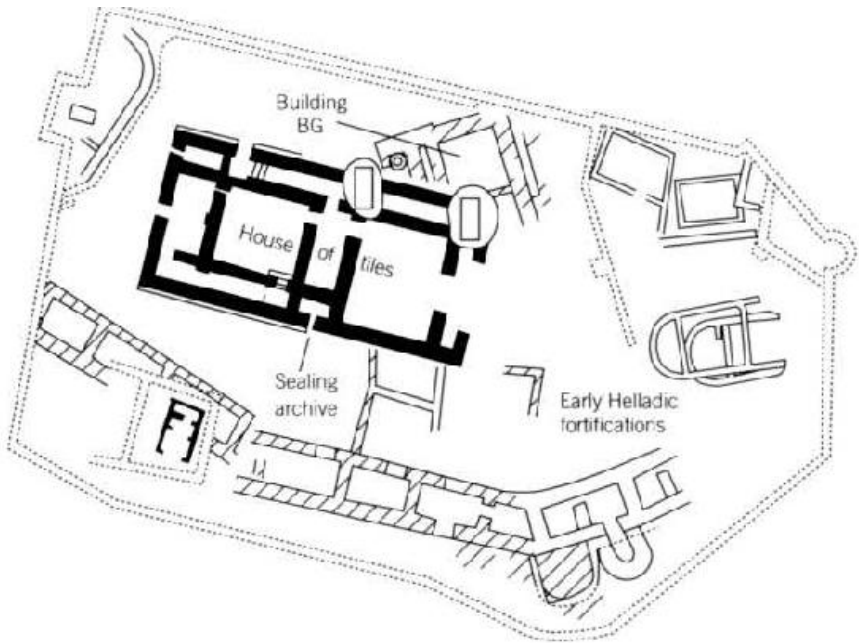
Large, internally complex rectangular buildings begin to appear in significant numbers during the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age on the Greek mainland, in the Cyclades, in western Anatolia and its nearby islands, and on Crete. Rectangular buildings, commonly entered on their short side(s), with axially connected rooms, are found in many parts of the region during this period, from Troy and Poliokhni in the northeast corner of the Aegean to central Greece and the Peloponnese in the southwest.

There are two notable variants of this building form. The first is what has come to be termed, as we have discussed, the megaron. It is composed of a series of rooms entered on the structure's short end into a porch (sometimes, if wide enough, with a supporting post or two), with an inner room or sequence of rooms interconnected along the same straight axis. The megaron is a type which has a long history in the Aegean (see Late Neolithic Dimini above), and prefigures the monumental and decorated core of the Late Bronze Age Mycenaean palaces a millennium later. But in contrast to the Aegean Neolithic but-and-ben constructions, megaron-type buildings are found across a much wider region of the eastern Mediterranean and Balkans."

The second variant is what has been called the corridor house, distinguished from the former by long narrow spaces (sometimes with traces of stairways) on the outer sides of an axially aligned set of rooms within. While the megaron appears in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze I Period, the more elaborate corridor houses begin to appear on the mainland later, during the half-millennium-long second phase of the Early Bronze Age (Early Helladic II, sometimes referred to as the Lerna III Period, c.2900-2400 BCE).

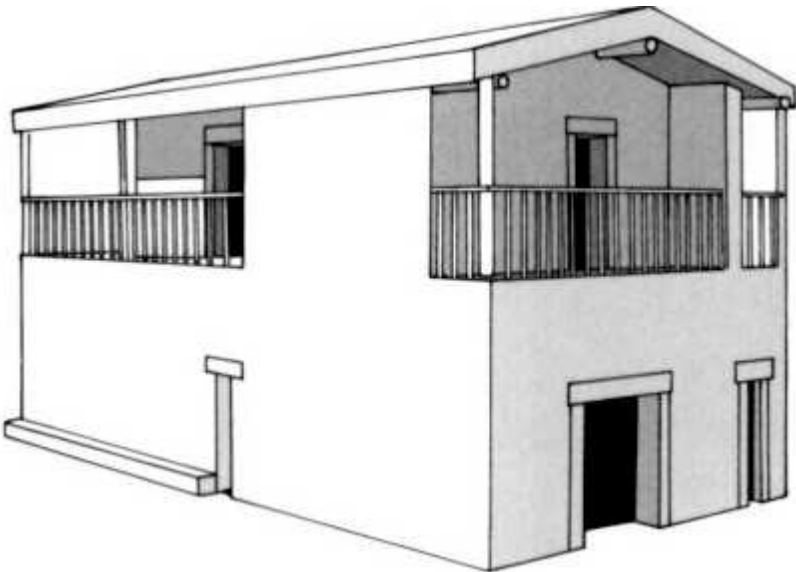
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Site plan of Lerna 111, Early Helladic, showing the fortifications and several building periods. Note the layout of the 'corridor-type' house known as the House of Tiles, so named because of the numerous roof tiles found in the building's ruins. This type of house appears on the mainland in the Early Helladic II Period (c.2900-2400 BCE). It stands over an earlier, similar house (BG) with a different orientation.



17

Reconstruction of the House of Tiles, Lerna III, Early Helladic II. The House of Tiles, built of mud brick over a stone foundation, is the best known 'corridor house', and dominates this small fortified coastal site.



One of the largest and most impressive of these corridor houses is the House of Tiles, dominating the fortified coastal settlement of Lerna

in the southwestern Argolid [161]. It was so named because of the enormous quantity of fired clay roof tiles found in the building's ruins during its excavation in the 1950s.¹² Measuring some 12 X 25 m and with its front end facing the shoreline, it was built of mud brick over a substantial stone foundation course, with traces of wood-sheathed door jambs, and of stucco-plastered walls in some rooms. Obviously a building of considerable importance, it was two storeys in height and may have had several verandas upstairs, partially covered by its pitched roof, as suggested in the reconstruction shown here [171].

Although there has been no clear consensus about the building's use and significance, the presence of extensive deposits of seal impressions both from the House of Tiles and its immediate predecessor, House BG, suggests that the settlement was of regional importance in the recording, processing, and distribution of commodities [181]. Building BG is more closely associated with the fortifications at Lerna and is significant for its monumentality and its intriguing clay hearth with a central cavity in the form of a double axe [19]. The double axe is significant as it assumes later importance as the dominant religious symbol in Minoan civilization, although we caution the reader that this hearth is heavily reconstructed and other examples are not entirely convincing. Such hearths were commonly decorated with stamped rims and they were frequently associated with Early Bronze Age structures on the mainland. Some attempt has been made to interpret them as household shrines." That Lerna played an important role in distribution and exchange during much of its history is suggested by the presence here of artistic motifs, pottery, and other portable objects produced during the Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages in places as far away as Crete, Troy, and the Cyclades 1201. In this regard, Lerna's House of Tiles is one of an increasing number of similar (and similarly impressive) complex structures, often within fortified settlements, that begin to appear throughout the Aegean region during the second period of the Early Bronze Age.

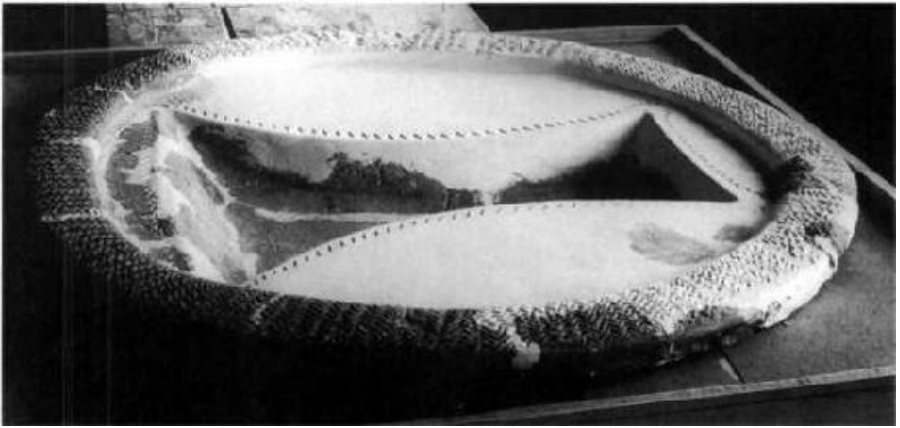
18

Drawings of three clay seal impressions found in the House of Tiles at Lerna. The motifs are generally geometrical patterns, but occasionally natural forms are depicted; note the seal with a spider in the centre. The presence of many seal impressions in the House of Tiles suggests that Lerna was important in the recording, processing, and redistribution of commodities.



19

Ceremonial hearth with labrys (double axe) carving, Lerna, Early Helladic II, from House BG, the predecessor to the House of Tiles. The rim of the hearth is decorated with stamped seal impressions.

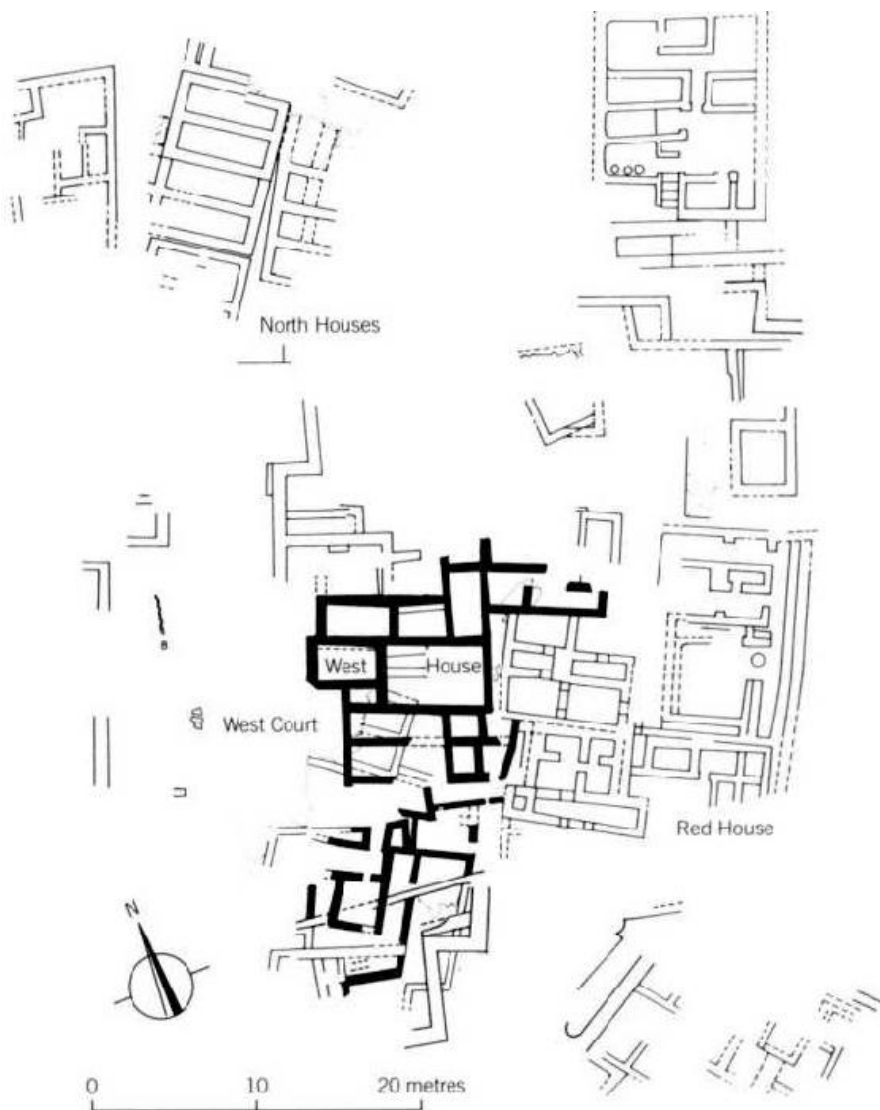


20

Late Early Helladic depas cup from Keos (right) and gold 'sauceboat' from Arcadia (below), Early Helladic II. Such objects were widely distributed throughout the Aegean during the period.



Site plan of Vasiliki, east Crete, Early Minoan 11. The walls filled in with black are dated to the Early Minoan IIB Period.



Crete

One such comparable settlement may have been the Early Minoan II building compound known in the archaeological literature as the House on the Hill at Vasiliki in eastern Crete [211.14 Recent investigation suggests that the compound was made up of conjoined structures, possibly belonging to related families. It was built piecemeal over time, a situation similar to that of the nearby (and much larger) site of Myrtos discussed below, although Vasiliki is

rather more regular in layout and construction than Myrtos.

As illustrated, Vasiliki is a site with confusing traces of walls and rooms scattered over the apparently unfortified area. The House on the Hill compound has long been of interest for several design features that to some seem to anticipate aspects of the design of the great central buildings (the 'palaces') of the subsequent Middle Minoan Period. These include: (i) a small paved western court or plaza; (a) a carved kernos or cupule stone, probably of some ritual or gaming significance, set into the court paving;¹⁵ (3) unusual care given to the exterior wall treatment of the western facade; (4) a labyrinthine arrangement of internal spaces; (5) coloured stucco walls; and (6), despite different building campaigns on the several sections of the compound, a sense of a grid-like consistency to the evolving overall plan.

The function of the building (if in fact it had a single function) is, however, far from clear, although the aforementioned design features may suggest comparison(s) with one or more of the functions of the building's 'palatial' ('temple'?) successors. In any case, Vasiliki may have been an important regional centre of activity during the Early Minoan Period, and may be seen as a miniature version of other Prepalatial sites on Crete, including much larger sites such as Phaistos or Mallia, or even the already vast settlement (some 5 hectares) now buried beneath the great palace building at Knossos.

The presence of coloured stucco wall surfaces at Vasiliki has been seen as an early step in the technology that led to the production of the later figural wall frescoes that are so prominent and ubiquitous in the Middle and Late Aegean Bronze Ages, in the Cretan and Mycenaean palaces and villas, and in the remarkable houses being uncovered on the island of Thera (Santorini). (See Chapters 4 and 5.)

Myrtos, Fournou Koriphi

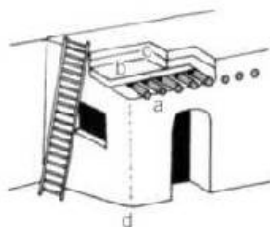
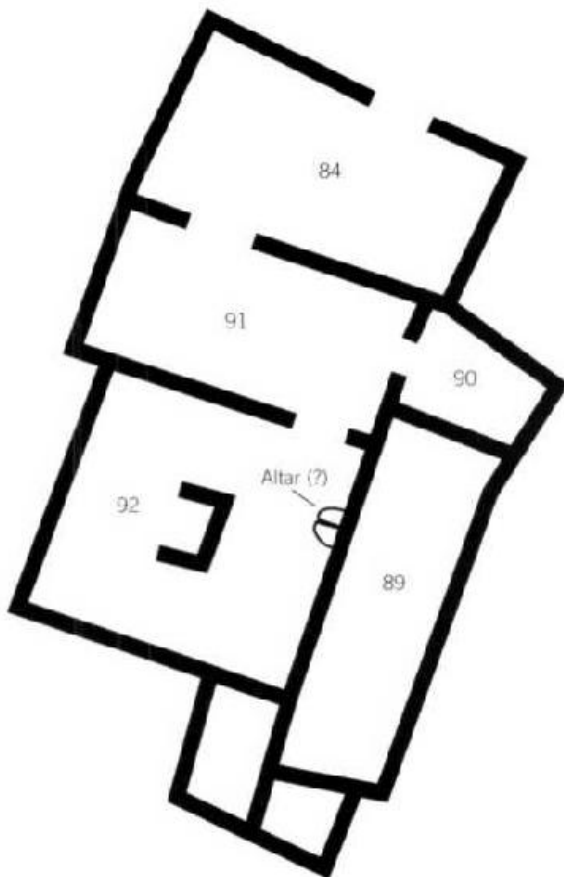
Myrtos, Fournou Koriphi is an Early Bronze Age, Prepalatial settlement located on the south coast of eastern Crete [22]. As the only settlement excavated from this time period, it has been intensely studied. The function of its individual buildings, the nature of its social structures, and its relationship to the later emergence of monumental architecture have been debated intensely." Myrtos continues what seems to be a Neolithic Aegean tradition of linking storage, ritual, and female fertility by means of art and material culture in a manner not unlike that which has been suggested for Dimini. Similar practices will persist through to the end of the Bronze

One interesting object, the so-called Goddess of Myrtos [231, that may be associated with a cluster of rooms located at the southwest end of the site, provides a close look at the relationship between ritual practice and storage. The Goddess has a hollow bell-shaped body and a solid neck." The only opening is through the jug held by spindly arms. The surface, including the moulded breasts, is decorated with red paint and incorporates a central triangular section that might be interpreted as the pubic area or a textile covering of the pubic area.

The excavator ruled out a simply utilitarian function for this object because of its long thin neck, spindly arms, and apparent design as a pouring vessel of some kind. He cited the long thin neck as evidence that it represented a deity, as most Early Minoan figurines of humans were rendered in 'roughly correct proportions'." The Myrtos Goddess has been taken by some as evidence for Minoan religious continuity from the Early Bronze Age onwards. It was found unbroken in room 92 (see 22) slightly above the floor and next to a bench-like feature made of stone slabs resting against the east wall. This feature has been interpreted as an altar. Not surprisingly, room 92 has been identified as a shrine.

22

Reconstructed plan of a house from the Early Minoan settlement at Myrtos, Fournou Koriphi, on the south coast of Crete. Room 92 may have been a shrine.



- a Transverse wooden beams
- b Layers of reed-canies laid over beams
- c Two layers of sun-baked plaster
- d External corner 'rounded' off by plaster

23

The so-called 'Goddess of Myrtos' vessel, with a hollow, bell-shaped body and solid clay neck. Found near a bench (possibly an altar) along the east wall of room 92, she holds a small jug, which constitutes the spout of the vessel, and her body is decorated with red paint.



The room probably formed the main chamber of a house that may be reconstructed based on architectural similarities to other structures.¹¹ It is of interest that this spatial arrangement is a less regular version of the plan of later square houses with a single column that form an important part of the vernacular tradition of house design on Crete (see Chapter 3). Like room 8o 1241, room 92 contained a wide assortment of vase forms including several amphoras, jars, bowls, a cooking pot, a couple of jugs, and two pithoi or large storage jars .211 It is significant that (shrine?) room 92 was directly connected with storage room 91.

Room 91 has been convincingly reconstructed as an oblong storage room and was found crammed full with 66 vases, mainly fineware, as

well as some large storage jars. This understandably led the building's excavators to interpret the chamber as a storeroom for the adjacent shrine, holding vases possibly connected to activities surrounding this Goddess.²¹ This arrangement appears comparable to repositories of stone vessels found in the later Minoan palaces. At the same time, the suite of rooms calls to mind notions of ritual symbolism connecting the domus, female fertility, and storage conjectured to have existed in Neolithic Dimini. A similar pattern of associations is discussed in connection with the Second Palace Period in Chapter 4.

24

Myrtos, Fournou Koriphi, storage room 80, showing a pot cupboard in its northwest corner.



The Cyclades

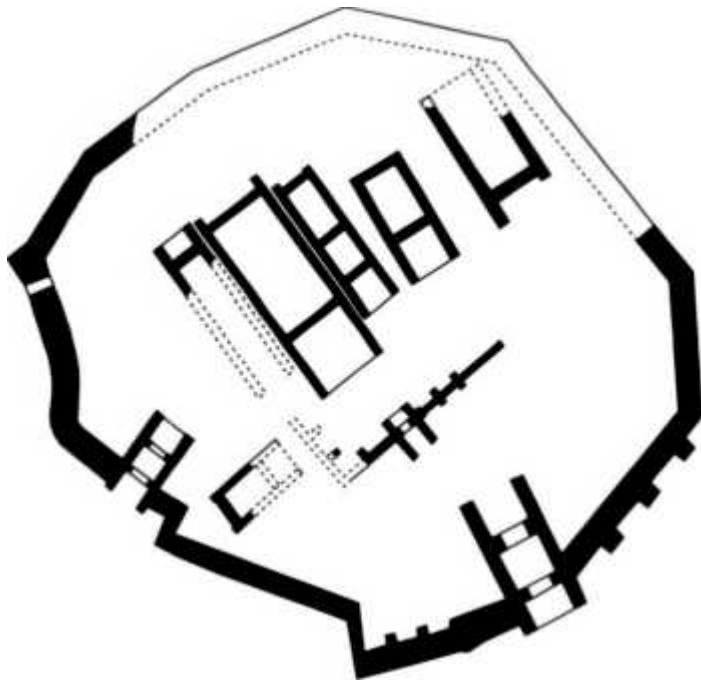
The plan of Lerna (see 16) bears some interesting formal similarities to those of contemporary sites in other parts of the central and northern Aegean, such as Kastri on the island of Syros, Troy II in northwestern Anatolia [25], and Poliokhni on the nearby island of Lemnos.²² These four sites provide a useful sample of the kinds of settlement patterns common throughout the Aegean Basin apart from Crete during the Early Bronze Age.

In each case, the settlement is well fortified, with thick stone-supported outer walls; bastions of round (Lerna, Kastri) or square (Troy, Poliokhni) form; heavily protected and/or hidden entranceways; the grouping of rooms or buildings into what were probably family compounds separated by alleys, streets, or courtyards; and with implications of social and/or functional hierarchy in the contrasting sizes and quality of construction (Lerna, Poliokhni, Troy). Lerna and a number of other mainland sites are dominated by a large finely constructed corridor house, while in the northeast Aegean, the fortified coastal settlement of Troy, dominated by a large megaron compound, contrasts with nearby Poliokhni on Lemnos, in which the portions of the town excavated to date contain megaron compounds of relatively similar size and plan, with no one structure dominating the landscape.

This type of fortified settlement with megaron or corridor-type house forms remained fairly constant from the end of the Neolithic Period to the end of the Bronze Age, a period of some 2000 years, in all regions of the Aegean Basin apart from Crete (where the megaron form only appears in the Late Bronze Age).

25

Plan of the Early Bronze Age II citadel of Troy I Ic. The heavily fortified settlement is dominated by a large central megaron flanked by four smaller ones, all within an inner walled and apparently colonnaded courtyard. Both the inner and outer citadels are accessed by a propylon or roofed gateway on the southeast, and there is a second, smaller gate on the southwest.



Amorgos, Dhokathismata style, Early Cycladic II Period. Female figurine of Parian marble, 0.3 m high. Of unknown significance, these marble figurines, mostly female, are found in graves. Once thought to represent female spirits or divinities (hence the term 'Cycladic idol'), they vary from being highly schematic to relatively naturalistic. Male figurines either carry weapons or play musical instruments such as flutes or harps.



Burial practices

The Greek mainland

The most common type of burial in the Early Bronze Age was the shallow cist-grave of roughly rectangular plan, bounded by walls made of upright stones, and covered with large stone slabs. Examples are found at virtually every coastal Greek mainland site, including Lerna, suggesting connections between the inhabitants of these coastal towns and the nearby islands.

The cist-graves normally contained a single burial, accompanied by occasional grave gifts such as pottery, jewellery, and other items presumed to have been part of (or imitating) the accoutrements of the deceased person's life.'

The Cyclades

Cemeteries in the Cycladic islands, with some exceptions (Chalandriani on Syros, with some 1,000 graves)," are relatively small, comprising the cist-tombs of single families or other small local groups. The graves themselves are fairly consistent in form, made up of a sunken rectangular pit lined with stone slabs and/or rough stones, and covered with a stone slab roof. The deceased may have been interred with some ceremony, which involved the placement of offerings, usually bits of jewellery, a weapon or two, and some stone or clay pottery, beside the body. On occasion, unusual articles such as those shown in illustrations 27, 28, and 29 have been found among the grave goods. There is a great deal of variation in the size and quality of tomb construction, and in the quantity and quality of grave offerings.

The object shown in 26, dating to the Early Bronze II (Early Cycladic II) Period and found on the island of Amorgos, is an example of a common white marble female folded-arm figurine, at one time referred to by archaeologists and art historians as Cycladic idols, when it was conjectured that they represented spirits or goddesses." The type occurs in a large number of female and male variants, from the highly schematic to the relatively naturalistic. Their function, usage, and cultural significance remain unclear.

Such objects occur in only a few graves, usually singly, occasionally in groups; a few are male, often seated or standing flautists or harpists, some wearing a dagger. Many appear to have had bodily

features or jewellery incised and/or painted; some females appear to be pregnant; and a small number are quite large, nearly half-life-size (1.5 m). These may have been used in household shrines or in ceremonial or cult contexts." The type was widely imitated on the Greek mainland and on Crete. More schematic versions occur throughout the Early Bronze Age in western Anatolia. Flattish female figures such as the one shown here may have been meant to be viewed lying down, perhaps imitating the position of the deceased.

These finely made white marble idols have come to form a distinctive set of artefacts with very great appeal to modern collectors and fine art connoisseurs around the world, and they have come to be taken as uniquely distinctive of a Cycladic culture or cultures during the Early Bronze Age that still remains so poorly known in other ways, despite recent advances in archaeological knowledge. So few of these marble sculptures have been found in well-documented archaeological contexts, and so very many have been circulated throughout the world by unscrupulous dealers, art collectors, and art historians complicit with illegal antiquities networks, that speculation about the origins, functions, and historical significance of these remarkable objects, however rhetorically attractive to contemporary tastes, often rests on very limited solid evidence. It is possible that some of the more unusual idols may in fact be modern forgeries.

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Found on Syros, the Early Cycladic II object in 27, whose shape suggested to early excavators that of a clay frying pan because of a raised rim on the reverse, is a fine example of an object whose function or significance is unknown, but which has been the source of rich and ingenious speculation. Decorated with a typically Cycladic running spiral motif (possibly here representing the sea or pubic hair) incised into the dark clay, in the middle of which is the profile of a ship with schematic oars and a fish on its prow, the object also has an incised triangle at its footed end. In some examples of this type can be found a schematic female pubic triangle, suggestive of fertility symbolism to some archaeologists. It is possible that these 'frying pans' also had some cosmetic function, the rimmed enclosure on their backs serving as a palette to mix cosmetics, not unlike the (zoomorphic) slate palettes found in Predynastic Egypt." However, hard evidence for such a purpose is lacking. If water were to be poured into these enclosures, the effect may have been rather mirror-like.

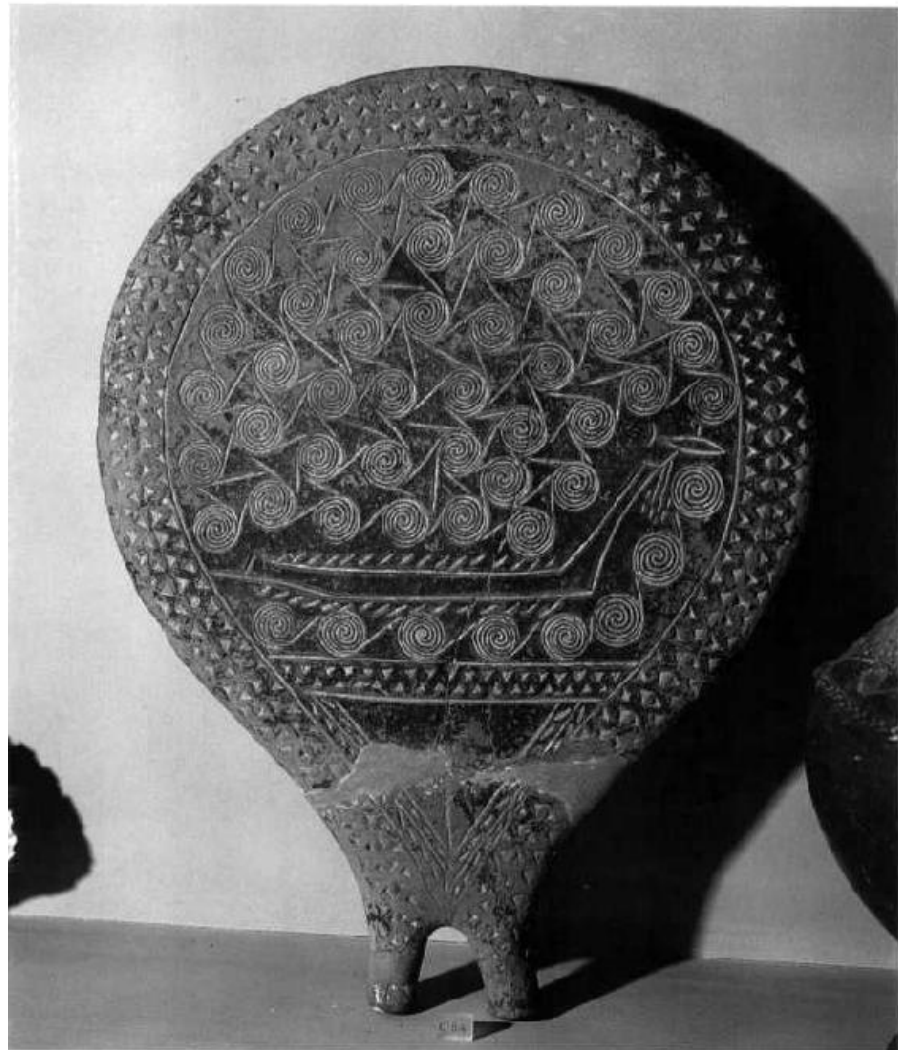
The inventiveness exhibited in the folded-arm figurines and so-called frying pans shows yet another unique expression in this vase [281

identified alternatively as a bear or a hedgehog drinking from a bowl. It is from Chalandriani on Syros. Many have remarked on its humour and liveliness. The intensity of labour that went into producing it, its delicacy, and uniqueness also point to a special function. It fits into a broad Mediterranean tradition of producing animal-shaped vessels.

This Early Bronze Age model of a granary from a tomb on the Cycladic island of Melos [29] is believed to be a series of cosmetic jars in the form of a granary complex. We have almost no evidence of Cycladic architectural forms, so it's tempting to see such representations as realistic. The form is certainly reminiscent of actual settlement complexes from Chalcolithic (Copper Age) and Early Bronze Age Cyprus. Granaries are believed by some to be the focal point of rituals connected with the planting season and the harvest in the later Minoan Period (see Chapter 3) when such rituals were seemingly connected with the means of a community's survival and focused on agriculture, death and regeneration, and fertility. Carved out of serpentine with incised spiral decoration, this model probably had a lid.

27

Syros, Chalandriani, Early Cycladic II Period. The flat surface of a clay utensil in the shape of a modern frying pan, decorated with incised, whitefilled spirals and the profile of a ship with a fish at one end. The triangular portion of the object has been taken to represent a female pubic triangle, above a double-footed handle. The significance of these Cycladic 'frying pans' is unclear.







29

Walled granary model from the island of Melos, Early Bronze Age. Chlorite.

Early Bronze Age burials on Crete

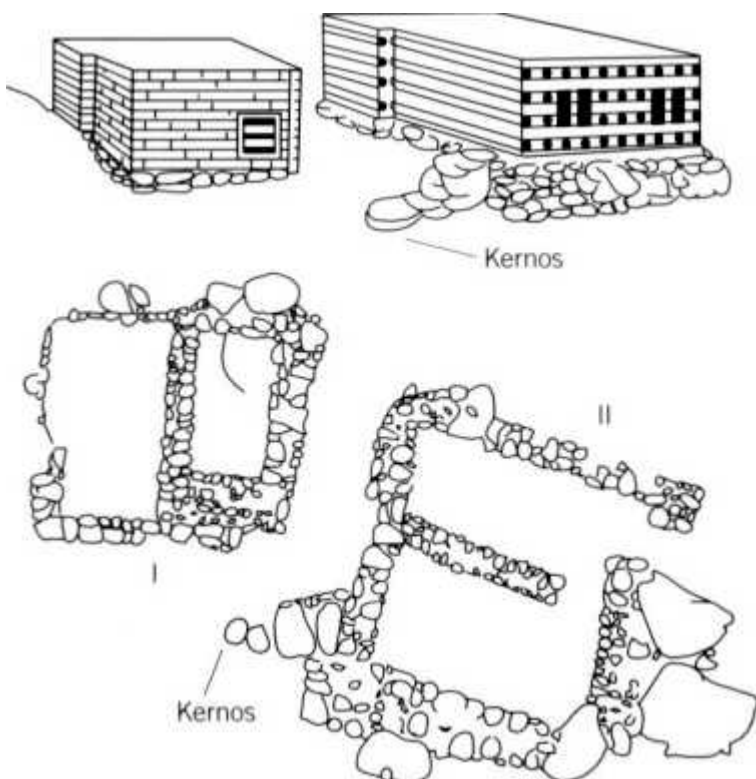
Prepalatial cemeteries on Crete are as significant for what they tell us about the religious beliefs of the population as they are for their refined tomb architecture and their gold and ivory grave goods. The tomb types under discussion here are the product of different regional styles or traditions. Rectangular or square house tombs with one, two, or more chambers tend to be the product of a central and east Cretan tradition while round or tholos tombs are the product of a south-central tradition associated with the Mesara Valley, a region dominated in the Middle and Late Minoan Periods by the city of Phaistos.

Built tombs were popular until the end of the Prepalatial period

when burial in pithoi or storage jars was introduced. The building of small square or rectangular tombs in the shape of houses replaces an earlier practice of interring the dead in caves and in rock shelters. The house tombs at Gournia 1301 in northeast Crete in the region of the Bay of Mirabello will serve as the prime example of this northern and eastern tradition. They were originally excavated in the early 1900s, then systematically restudied in the 1970s, in both instances by a team of American archaeologists.

Their arrangement is quite simple, following the arrangement of Neolithic but-and-ben houses with a roughly square space divided into two parts by a spur wall running down the middle with an opening at one end. The entrance to the house tomb is generally at the short end of one of the rectangular rooms created by this spur wall. The location of the spur wall is indicated externally by the projection of the facade of one room and the corresponding recess of the other room. This practice of creating recesses and projections would be incorporated into the later palaces on a monumental scale, thus creating a play of light and shade thought to be pleasing to the viewer.

Gournia, northeast Crete, Early Minoan II, built tombs land II; plan and reconstruction. Tombs in the north and east of the island during this period were mainly rectangular and house-like in plan and elevation, built on a rough stone and mortar foundation, with upper walls of mud brick, and with a timber-supported flat roof.



28

Syros, Chalandriani, Early Cycladic II Period. Vase in the shape of a small bear or hedgehog decorated with dark paint on a light ground. The animal carries a deep bowl which opens into its neck.

The lower walls of the tomb were constructed of available field stones as well as larger boulders held together by mortar consisting of mud, pebbles, and broken pottery. These elements would be arranged to create a flat surface for finishing the upper part of the walls with mud brick. The roof would be constructed of wooden beams, mud, reeds, and coated with plaster.

A low platform extending beyond the outer corner of Tomb II at Gournia contained a flat, discoidal stone with 22 small hollows or cupules placed near the edge of the stone. All of these hollows are small and shallow, although one is noticeably larger than the rest. Such a stone is known as a kernos or cupule stone. Kernoi appear in the Prepalatial Period on Crete where they are found in association with both tombs and houses. They tend to be associated with the later palaces and one is even attested at the Postpalatial settlement at Kavousi. The cupules are reminiscent of the hollows made by grinding

grain and many want to connect these kernoï with the religious practice of leaving a token grain offering to a deity. Others have interpreted them as gaming stones with the cupules serving as receptacles for tokens for an improvised game. If seeds were used as gaming tokens, it might be possible to reconcile both interpretations.

House tombs elsewhere, as at Mochlos, frequently made use of the natural terrain by constructing the tomb against the side of a cliff, thereby incorporating living rock into the architecture. Such a practice is appropriate for a civilization that incorporated so many aspects concerned with nature into its religion. Building against the cliff-face also served a practical purpose in terms of facilitating construction that is still taken advantage of in more modern constructions. The tomb builders at Mochlos incorporated several other features that we tend to associate with the Minoan palaces on a grander scale. These include the frequent use of large upright slab blocks known as orthostates and the frequent and intentional use of different coloured stone including black limestone, and red and green schist. One tomb even has a stepped approach leading to a paved terrace that could conceivably have served as a gathering place for those related to the deceased. Attention to such details indicates a concern with planning, even though additional rooms might be constructed at a later date to accommodate the needs of the population.

The cemetery at Mochlos contained some of the most elaborate Prepalatial objects found anywhere. These included jewellery such as gold pins and diadems, votive double axes, sealstones, silver cups, other ritual vessels such as bull rhyta, less elaborate vessels made of terracotta with painted decoration, bronze tools and weapons, and stone bowls and palettes.

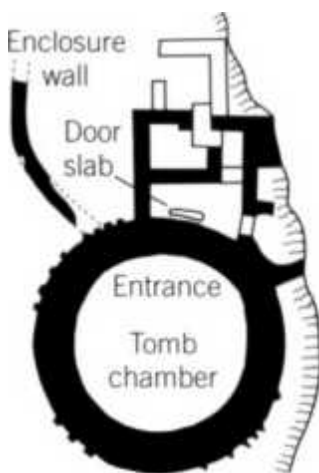
Mallia, Chrysolakkos cemetery, Early Minoan gold bee pendant, with very fine granulation and filigree decoration. The two bees are manipulating what appears to be a globule of honey.



The skeletal remains from Mochlos and elsewhere have provided modern scholars with a great deal of insight with regard to the treatment of the dead. It has been suggested that one room of the tomb chamber would be used to inter the deceased who would be provided with personal possessions, adornments, and food and drink to sustain him or her in the journey to the afterlife. Once the body of the deceased had decayed, the bones might be swept aside into an adjoining room while the skull would be put aside among other skulls, sometimes with a small offering of food or liquid as a final tribute. The care and attention with which the dead were treated would have helped individuals to maintain a sense of continuity with their past.

The earlier Prepalatial round or tholos tombs of the Mesara Valley in southern Crete represent a separate regional tradition that continues into the Protopalatial Period with the construction of the Kamilari tholos [311.2" This south Cretan tradition has been tentatively connected to Cypriot influence where round houses were a common feature in the early periods. Minoan tholos tombs were free-standing and should not be confused with the later beehive-shaped tombs of Mycenaean Greece, also referred to as tholoi although their influence

on these later tomb-types continues to be debated.



31

Kamilari, south-central Crete, Early Minoan II, tholostomb. Made of roughly worked stone, the tomb was entered on the east through a series of small chambers which had become ossuaries at a later date; this outer area was partly enclosed by a stone wall.

The inward-leaning walls of the tholos tomb at Kamilari are constructed of roughly worked blocks still preserved to a height of 2 M. The rough workmanship of the stone and lack of preserved stone from the collapsed roofs of some Minoan tholoi argues against them having corbelled or beehive-shaped roofs like later mainland Greek tombs. Flat roofs of wood and stone or conical roofs constructed of mud brick remain possibilities although no evidence of mud brick is preserved. However, enough fallen stone was found at Kamilari to indicate that it probably had a vaulted ceiling that later collapsed. The entrance to the tomb chamber on the east fits the general pattern found at other such tombs that might connect beliefs about the afterlife to the rising of the sun.

The main chamber at Kamilari was reached through a series of maze-like antechambers that were used as ossuaries in subsequent periods. The doorway was topped by a massive lintel block and covered with a stone slab. Although Kamilari was robbed in antiquity, the character of the finds included in Minoan tholoi seems to correspond to the types of items found at other sites such as Mochlos. Evidence of burning at Kamilari and indications of hearths elsewhere have been interpreted as either for fumigation or a practice of funerary banqueting. The notion of banqueting is reinforced by the

hundreds of cups and vases found in and around the Kamilari tholos. As in the rectangular house tombs, the bones of decomposed bodies were swept aside while the skulls were collected separately.

The Chrysolakkos funerary complex at Mallia is a square, multi-chamber structure with a court that was renewed and reused in subsequent periods, obscuring the internal arrangement of the original building. ;) Cult equipment such as kernoï and offering tables as well as the limited amount of skeletal remains has suggested to some that the building was connected to the funerary cult and the treatment of the dead prior to final burial elsewhere in the vicinity. The name Chrysolakkos, meaning Gold Hole, is thought to be a reference to the looting that was carried out here in modern times.

One object that was overlooked was the famous gold bee pendant 132] that depicts two symmetrically arranged bees appearing to place a globule of honey in a comb. Pendant disks, perhaps serving as an artistic shorthand for the honeycomb, are suspended by gold wire from their wings and conjoined tails. The entire arrangement is suspended from a spherical filigree cage holding a gold bead and attached to a small hoop. The honeycomb, pendant disks, and stripes on the bees' lower bodies are rendered with minute beads of gold in a technique known as granulation.

The bee pendant is important for a couple of reasons. First of all, it is one among numerous pieces of Pre- and Protopalatial art works including sealstones and pottery motifs exhibiting bilateral symmetry. The presence of such works implies that the later rejection of bilateral symmetry by Minoan craftspersons in their art and architecture represented a conscious desire to create more complex and naturalistic compositions. Secondly, the granulation and filigree techniques used on the pendant and other pieces were learned through contacts and cultural exchanges with the Near East. Such contacts indicate that the Minoans were active participants in this cultural milieu from an early stage in their cultural development.



The First Palace Period

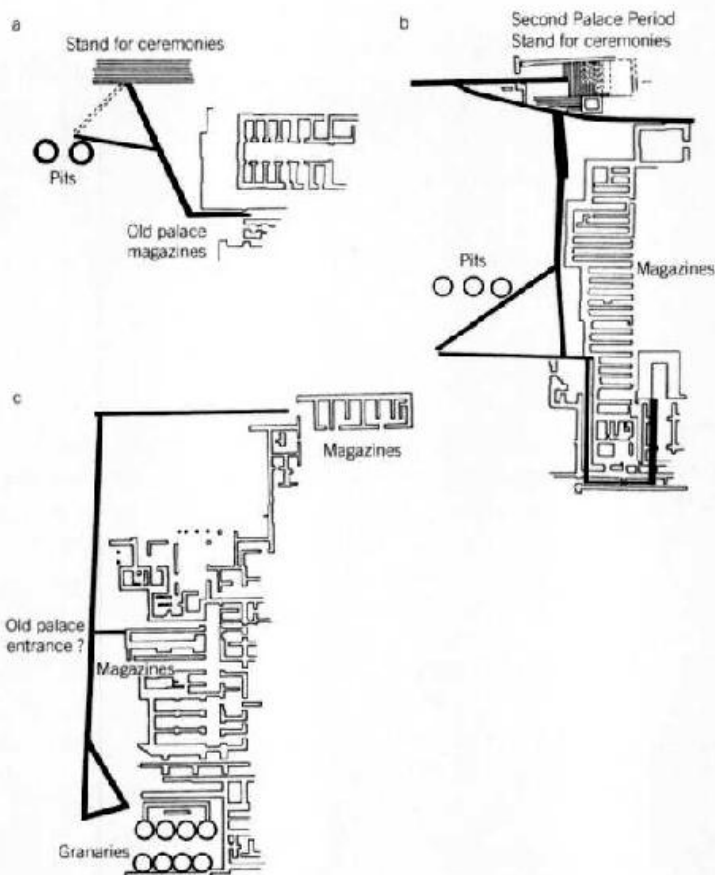
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Middle Bronze Age palaces and villas

We remain ignorant of the exact circumstances that led to the increases in population on Crete at the end of the Early Minoan Period which appear to have accompanied the impressive growth and coalescence of the cities of Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia with their great central building compounds, marking the Middle Minoan Period. Called 'palaces' by their first excavators, these finely conceived and constructed monumental buildings have no precedent in Crete itself in terms of scale and complexity, although certain of their design features were prefigured in some late Early Minoan buildings in various parts of the island, as mentioned above.

At any rate, the Minoan palaces, as they are still commonly referred to, are in every way remarkable structures that, ever since their dramatic discovery a century ago, have come to be emblematic of the aesthetically antithetical notions that the term Minoan has meant in modern times. For some, Minoan palaces are hopelessly labyrinthine and confused agglomerations of spaces devoid of architectonic logic or functional clarity. For others, these massive building compounds clearly exhibit a brilliance in harmonic design and precise execution, combined with an exquisite sensitivity to landscape siting and natural formation.

Today, a century after their discovery, the latter assessment has gained wider acceptance, while the former is understood as not incorrect in some instances. The fact of the matter is that the palaces and other large structures were in use in some cases for the better part of a millennium, often surviving multiple earthquakes and subsequent rebuildings and reorganizations. But the evidence of remarkable sophistication in the original conception of the central buildings at Phaistos, Mallia, and Knossos, and of great care and precision in their planning, layout, and construction, is unmistakable [33]. The same may also be said for many other urban buildings and great country houses, particularly during the Neopalatial Period.'



Comparative plans of the western blocks and west courts of the Minoan palaces at Phaistos, Knossos, and Mallia, showing the triangular raised causeways in the paved west courts, and, at Phaistos and Knossos, the stepped 'theatral areas' on the north, and the sunken koulouras (pits) next to the causeways. At Mallia, the triangular causeway is adjacent to a series of above-ground silos.

Although the designation 'palace' will be retained here for convenience, it is increasingly evident that these great multistoreyed buildings bear little resemblance to the residential headquarters of Mycenaean rulers of the Late Bronze Age mainland—the buildings to which they were initially compared when first discovered. Nor are there any clear parallels to palatial constructions in Egypt or the Near

East in the current archaeological record. But the problem with calling the Minoan buildings 'palaces' is that the term foregrounds only one likely (and not uncontested) function of these compounds. There is no solid evidence that these were the residences-permanent or temporary-of queens, kings, or priests, or other political or religious functionaries.

The Minoan palaces were distinctly multifunctional centres of their respective cities, combining what we might designate today as religious, commercial, manufacturing, social, political, ceremonial, and other activities, some public, others private, in a common structural framework with many different gradations of separation from and connection to the rest of the urban fabric. Although the openness and accessibility of the buildings to the rest of their cities has often been exaggerated, the fact is that their many different kinds and sizes of interior spaces, terraces, stepped platforms, and courtyards comprise a complexly articulated mosaic of interwoven activities; these are porous monuments rather than castles.

A Minoan palace may best be understood as a theory or diagram of an ideal integration of the component parts of Minoan life and society, assembled together in a sophisticated architectural package, itself harmoniously integrated into its environment. In that respect, it was a microcosm or model of the Minoan world.

Phaistos

One of the most dramatically situated Minoan settlements, the city known by its later Greek name of Phaistos (PA-I-TO in the later Linear B tablets) stands on the eastern end of a large promontory overlooking the great Mesara Valley plain in the southern part of the island.² At the western end of the same outcrop of hills, just under an hour's walk away, and with a view to the Bay of Mesara beyond to the west, stands the large Second and Third Palace Period complex of buildings known today as Haghia Triadha.

To the north of both sites, beyond a series of low hills in the foreground, is the great double-topped Mount Ida, the tallest in the line of Cretan mountains in the central part of the island. The major structures at Phaistos and Haghia Triadha were laid out in relationship to this twin peak; and it seems likely that the two successive palaces of Phaistos were built so as to specifically frame the mountain's double top, which would have loomed over the original north facade of their central court, when viewed from its centre (see 44 and Chapter 4). Ida's significance in Minoan social or religious ceremony is suggested

by the presence of a long-used cave sanctuary, known today as Kamares, whose entrance is itself visible from the Phaistos site.;

The eastern edge of the promontory of Phaistos has been the site of extensive habitation from the beginning of the Early Minoan Period to the Hellenistic Period and beyond. In the early Middle Minoan Period, construction began on what was to become the extensive First Palace compound of Phaistos, still partially visible under and on the western margins of the impressive remains of the finely built Second Palace. The latter was constructed over the central portion of the ruins of the first building, after the First Palace was covered over by a thick foundation layer of cement. The platform laid down to support the second building effectively preserved large portions of the First Palace's western section, including the large west court and what has been called its theatral area on its northern side (see below).



34

Kamares-style jug from Phaistos, Middle Minoan II, height 27 cm. Kamares ware, named after the cave sanctuary on Mount Ida where it was first found, is a type of pottery decoration prevalent during the Protopalatial Period. This wheel-made ware is characterized by its fine clay and often very thin ('eggshell') walls. The intricate polychrome decoration, with red and white geometric and floral designs on a black ground, maybe an elaboration of earlier light-on-dark pottery.

What remains today of the first Phaistos compound are walls and pavements shown in grey in our plan, outlined walls belonging to the later Second Palace [351]. The building was conceived as a unit and constructed over time on several terraces ascending to the north, and may have covered most of the eastern end of the high promontory; it extends more than 200 in from west to east and north to south. A substantial section of the hill fell away at an unknown time, destroying the southeastern quarter of the buildings, and thus the original extent of each in that area is unknown.

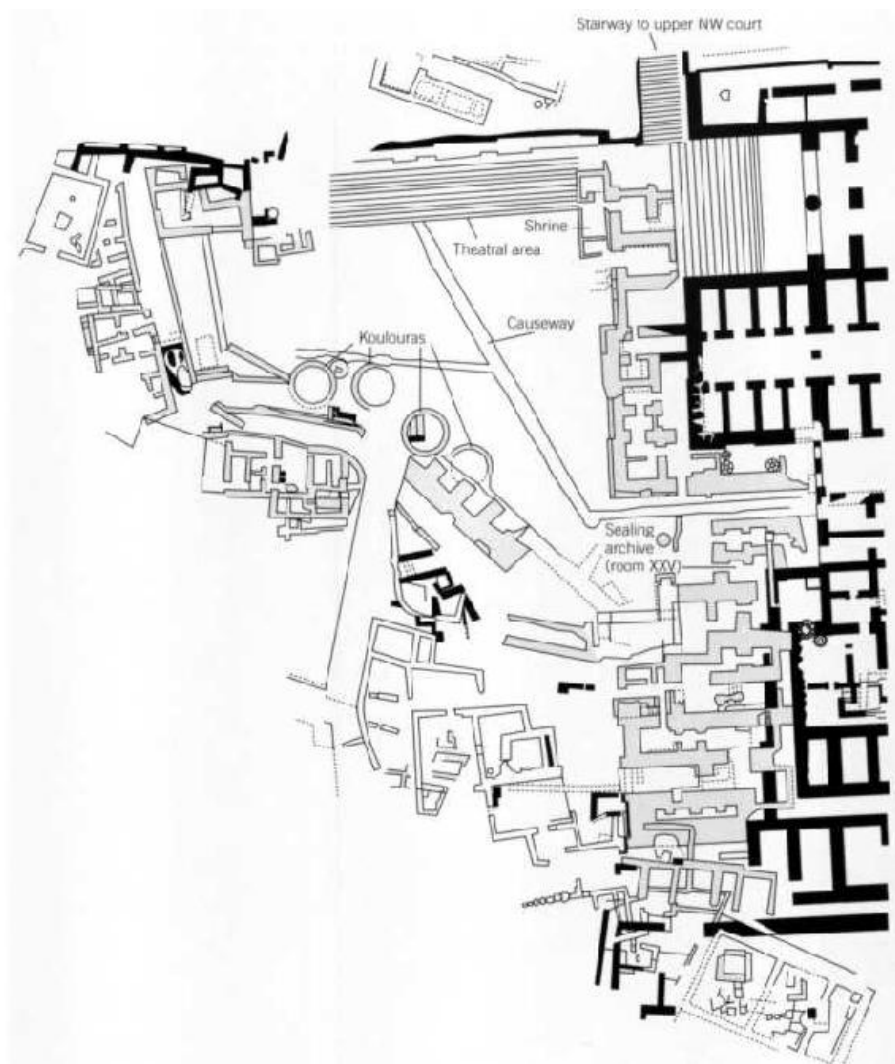
The extant portions of the First Palace include a carefully laid out indented western facade with a series of adjacent small rooms, some opening out on to the western terraces; a trapezoidal west court on a middle terrace, with a triangular raised causeway at its centre, connecting what was probably a major western entrance to the building with a theatral area on the north side of the court, and (just short of a series of rooms of unknown function on the east) the upper end of a ramp descending to the level of the lower (southern) terrace. The middle west court was bordered on the south by four koulouras or round stone-lined pits [361, forming part of a retaining wall separating the middle and lower courts. The theatral area on the north side was built against a retaining wall separating this middle terrace from a paved upper platform to the north. Nearly all of this terracing and First Palace construction was covered over by the Second Palace, when a new cement surface was laid down to support the second building.

Map 2

Bronze Age Crete showing major sites



Detailed plan of the western wing, including the cult area, of the First Palace of Phaistos, of the early Middle Minoan Period. Walls and pavements shown in black represent the Second Palace, while the outlined grey walls represent those of the earlier First Palace.



This uppermost (northwest) court was connected to the middle (west) court by a stairway from the western part of the palace; it contained a raised causeway running north-south, and a retaining wall on the northwest, suggesting the existence of yet another, even higher, terrace in that area. The southern side of this terrace is largely empty of building remains, apart from the foundations of a later Greek building. To the northeast are walls and rooms partly covered by later (Second Palace) construction, including rooms (on the extreme northeast of the promontory) which may have formed part of an

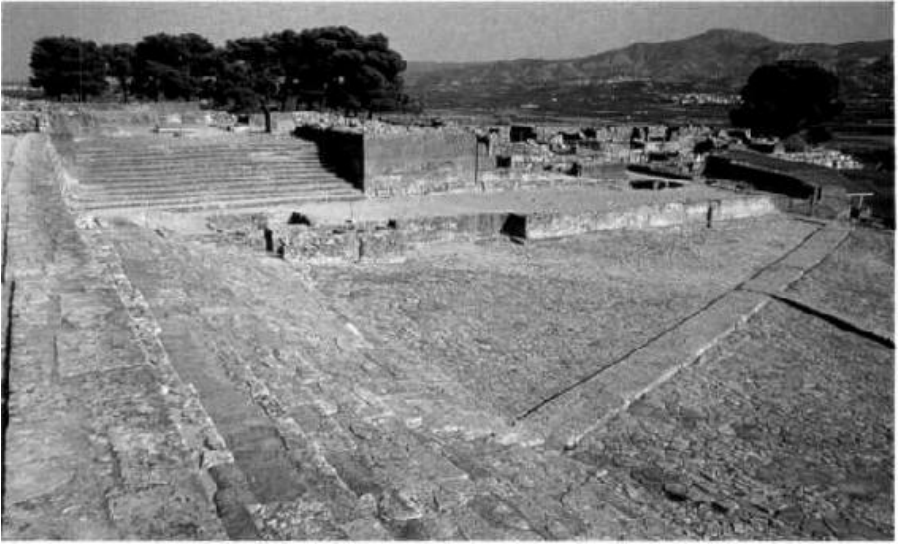
original northeast entrance system to the First Palace; one of these areas may have formed part of the building's records archive, as clay fragments of inscriptions in the undeciphered Minoan hieroglyphic script, and the (to date unique, and also undeciphered) Phaistos disk were found here 1371. Dating possibly to the Middle Minoan IIIB Period, or the eighteenth century BCE, the disk is impressed on both sides with pictographic symbols arranged in a spiral. The signs are grouped and divided from each other by lines and may possibly denote words or phrases. The only parallels for these signs are incised on a double axe from the Arkalochori Cave.

In the south-central part of the First Palace were found traces of the original central court pavement, with remains of the foundations of a colonnade forming its western flank, as well as a pillar crypt room to the southwest. The plan clearly indicates the way in which the later construction of the Second Palace was accommodated to remaining traces of the First Palace, using some of its extant walls or wall foundations, and some original pavements.

Very little is known about the functions of the First Palace; most of what remains points to storage rooms on the western edge of the building (a circumstance repeated at all the other palaces in each period), with some magazines in the northwest corner later modified to serve as small shrines that opened out to the west court. We do not know how the various paved courts may have been used, or what the differences in usage might have been between the west and central courts. But as we shall see below, the Phaistos west court contains features repeated at Knossos and Mallia in the First Palace Period, suggesting similar or complementary community functions.

This First Palace at Phaistos was clearly a very important social and cultural centre dominating much of south-central Crete and the fertile Mesara Valley plain, and most likely also whatever sea-trade might have focused upon its bay. We do not know the circumstances that led those responsible for Phaistos to abandon the original organization of their impressive compound after its destruction by earthquake and build a distinctly different construction on top. But that decision has left us with a clear picture of two distinct conceptions of architecture and design in the Middle and Late Minoan Periods, changes that are not as stark or as sudden elsewhere.

causeways and theatral area.



37

One side of the undeciphered Phaistos disk, dated to the Middle Minoan IIIB Period. Both sides of the Phaistos disk are impressed with what appear to be pictographic signs, arranged in a spiral and divided into groups by transverse lines.



Mallia. • QuartierMu

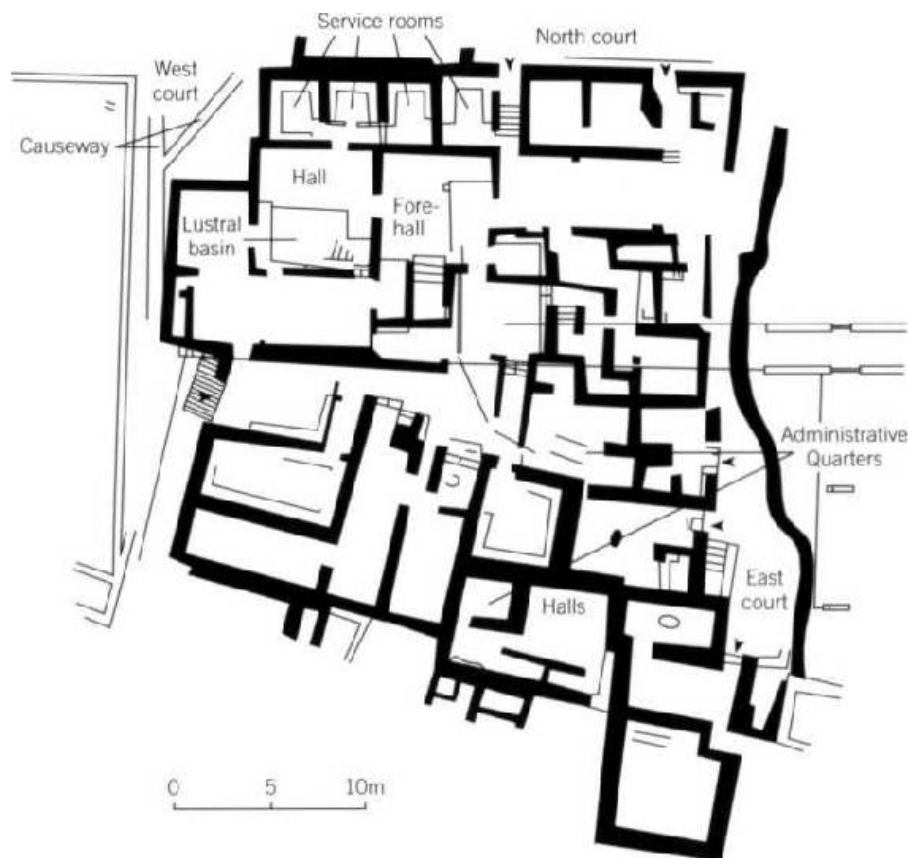
Building A in Quartier Mu at Mallia in central Crete [381 is an imposing administrative structure that dates to the First Palace Period. Quartier Mu is critical to understanding the emergence of Minoan palace architecture because it contains a series of important buildings incorporating ceremonial, administrative, and craft activities, including a workshop for making sealstones. Building A in Quartier Mu is possibly the earliest building to incorporate many of the design features that we have come to associate with the Minoan palaces.

With some slight variations, a group of rooms within Quartier Mu replicates the plan of the Throne Room at Knossos, which indicates the importance of this building. These rooms include an elaborately paved forehall with light-well leading into a hall which overlooks an exceptionally deep (nearly 2 m) lustral basin (a small sunken room reached by a flight of steps) entered from an adjoining room, and a suite of service rooms along the side. A room to the west of this

complex contained a rectangular hearth with a cupule or depression. Such hearths are typically associated with sanctuaries. A small chamber just inside the west facade and near the west entrance contained a kernos stone with many cupules believed by some to have functioned as an offering table. A similar feature is found near the south entrance in the Mallia palace.

38

Mallia, plan of Quartier Mu showing the large administrative structure, Building A. Dated to the First Palace Period, Building A abuts several other structures, some of which were workshops, and fronts on the small paved courts on the east, west, and north. The small west court has a raised causeway running north-south.



Building A also incorporated the indented west facade, west court, and raised triangular causeway that are associated with the First Palace Period, as we shall see below. Documents of various types including medallions and tablets inscribed with Minoan script and

impressed with sealings were found in the southeast wing of Building A. Such documents were used to keep a record of goods and to track their movement. Many of the sealings were found near the east entrance, indicating an exchange of goods. Magazines in the southwest wing contained numerous large storage jars or pithoi, adding to the palatial character of the building.

Monastiraki

The settlement of Monastiraki [401 is also the site of an imposing administrative complex of the Protopalatial Period.' Situated in the middle of western Crete and overlooking the Amari Valley, Monastiraki was ideally located to facilitate trade between Phaistos and the fertile Mesara Valley to the south and sites located in the vicinity of modern Rethymnon on the north coast. Some of its pottery is said to resemble that of Phaistos. A clay building model constitutes another valuable find.' The director of the Greek excavations, Athanasia Kanta, interpreted the monumental structures at Monastiraki as a 'palace'. Thus far, many palatial features have been uncovered, confirming Monastiraki's position as an ancestor of the sophisticated complexes we see in the succeeding era.

What has been uncovered consists of a series of complexes partially located on the hilltop and partially terraced into the side of the hill. Cutting into the side of a hill to construct a terrace to build upon was a typical Minoan construction technique. The side of the hill provided a natural support for the rear wall of a room which could in turn provide greater support for an upper storey, which would itself often be connected to adjacent ground-level rooms on the adjoining hilltop. Such multilevel constructions are found throughout Bronze Age Crete.

The lower north terrace at Monastiraki contained a series of rectangular storerooms containing pithoi. Recent excavations uncovered a monumental, though unconventional, reception hall on the upper terrace above the storage area. The cut limestone door jambs and a large column base indicate the importance of the hall (see 40). This structure opened onto a paved west court-a feature common to palatial buildings.' A complex of 60 interconnected storage rooms located to the southeast indicates a sophisticated design programme reminding one of the legendary associations of Minoan architecture with mazes and labyrinths. It is still unclear whether these areas were physically connected, but they seem to be clearly associated through their related functions of storage, reception, and administration.

Drawings of Cretule sealings with Minoan hieroglyphs from Phaistos. Sealings such as the ones illustrated were an important instrument of Minoan administration, concerned with recording the storage and distribution of various kinds of agricultural and manufactured products. That this was a large-scale system of administration is evidenced at Phaistos, for example, where a sealing archive (dated to Middle Minoan IIB) located in room 25 was found with over 6,500 clay nodules.





40

Photographs of Monastiraki, showing the reception hall and administrative complex, dated to the Protopalatial Period. The site is important for reconstructing trade patterns within the island, and for understanding the nature and organization of the first palaces.

This last area contained approximately 700 clay sealings fallen from an upper storey. Such a find testifies to the presence of a sophisticated administrative system in what had seemingly become a tradition of the Protopalatial Period. With no earlier precedents, it might have been influenced by either a mainland tradition as we saw at Lerna or a Near Eastern tradition.' The fact that the building went out of use by the Neopalatial Period might be attributed to its unusual location in

the hinterland, far removed from any harbour at a time when many commodities seem to have been transported by boat.

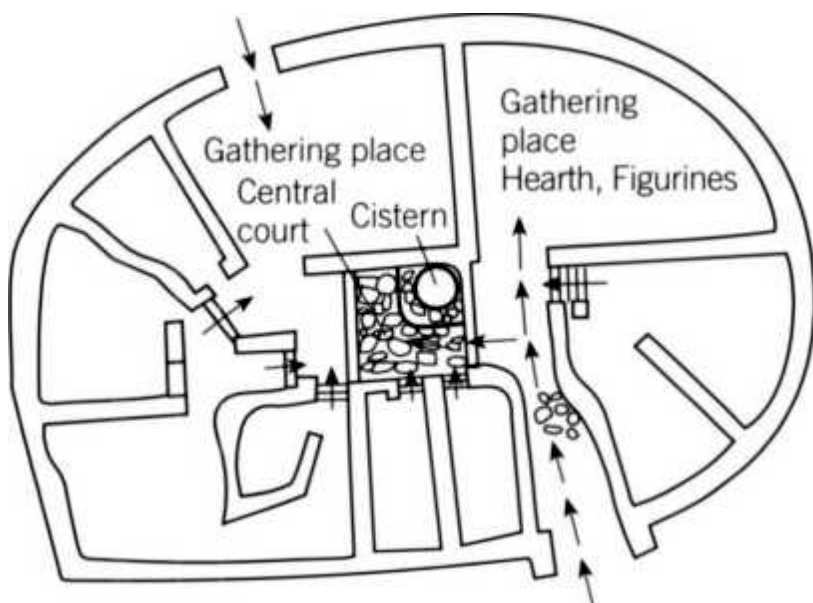
Chamaizi

Located in east Crete, the Oval House at Chamaizi includes a number of unique features which have given rise to conflicting interpretations. These include its position on top of a conical hill, and its unusual ovoid ground plan conforming to the shape of the hill. The building contained features such as a hearth and figurines which suggest to some that this may have been a religious or ceremonial building, whether or not it may also have been a residence [411.]

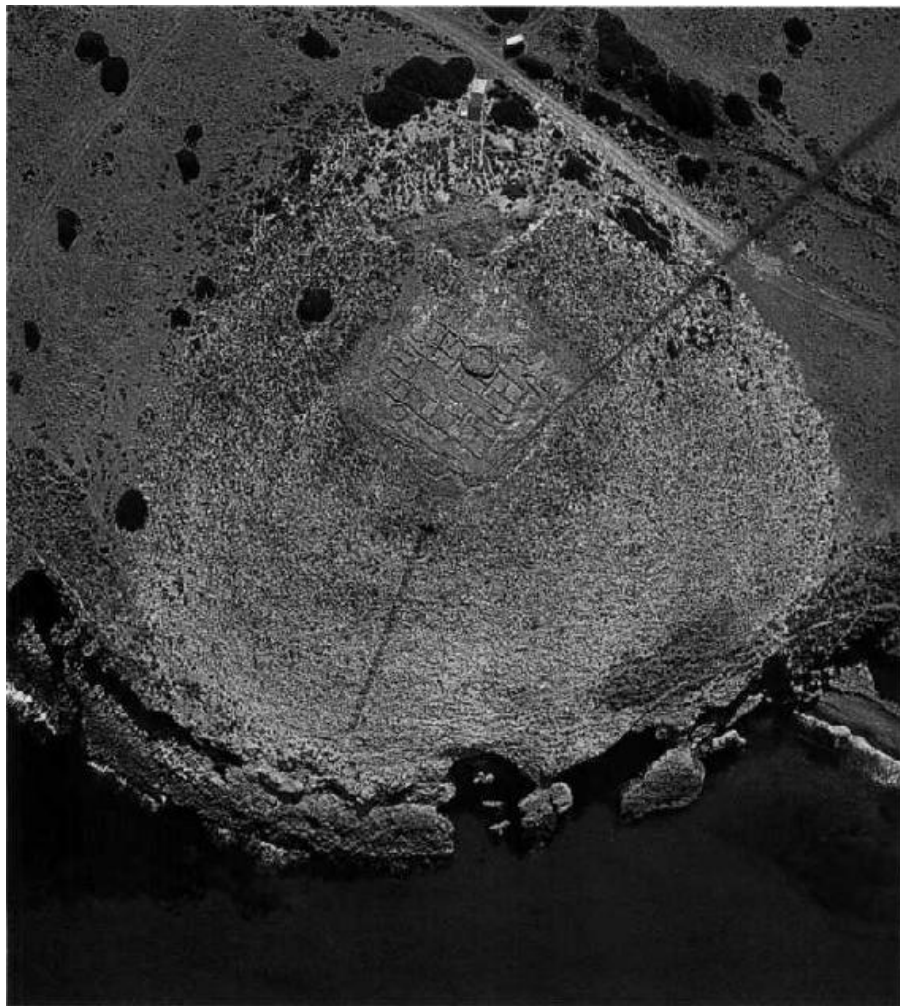
Containing a dozen interior spaces around a small paved central court with a cistern in one corner, the building was divided into two distinct zones, each with its own entrance. It may have had two storeys, and some of what has been interpreted as cult equipment has fallen from the upper storey, including male and female figurines, miniature jugs, and a round offering table. The large northeast room contained a hearth, and the presence of loomweights in the building suggests that textiles were produced here, although most likely not on a large or commercial scale.

41

Plan of the Oval House at Chamaizi in eastern Crete, Middle Minoan I. Note the small paved court and cistern in the building's centre.



Aerial view of the fortified building at Ayia Photia, Middle Minoan IA. Note the rounded projections or bastions on the circuit wall which may have been used for viewing and/or defence. They differ from bastions found elsewhere in the Aegean in being solid constructions.



Ayia Photia

Ayia Photia [42] is an important but still little known Middle Minoan IA site in east Crete, situated on a headland some 5 km east of the city of Sitea. Ayia Photia is unique both for its circuit wall and its early incorporation of a number of palatial architectural features.' The remains of the circuit wall are preserved on three sides along with the

remains of several semicircular bastions.

Though larger on Crete, the rounded projections on the circuit wall may well be the functional equivalent of the semicircular bastions found in Early Cycladic architecture as at Kastri on Syros and Early Helladic architecture such as Lerna on the mainland." It has been suggested that the many Early Cycladic finds from the nearby Early Minoan cemetery indicate a Cycladic presence in the area." It should be noted that the main difference between the bastions at Ayia Photia and those of its Aegean island cousins is their solid interior. There is also a contextual difference: the orientation of the Ayia Photia bastions towards the sea suggests that they were used as much for viewing or observation as for defence.

The one-storey rectangular building measures approximately 18 x 27.5 m, and includes over 30 spaces organized around a long, narrow central court. The main entrance to the court was on the west end and another entrance was later added on the east end. A stone-lined pit or kouloura situated to the northeast is a feature typically found in the west courts of the First Palaces. The simple regularity of Ayia Photia's rectangular shape is rare in later palatial-style villas, which normally have very complex systems of projecting and recessed wall facades, but it is common in more vernacular buildings and in annexes to large Neopalatial buildings." Ayia Photia is itself comparable in size to such annexes.

The recesses visible in the north wall are another feature commonly found in the palaces and palatial villas. One archaeologist believed that such recesses indicated the presence of windows in Minoan buildings, particularly on an upper storey, as few Minoan buildings reveal traces of ground-floor windows.¹³ The presence of recesses in the north wall alone might further indicate that this was the formal public front of the building and that it received more attention from the builders; in any case, this would have been the most visible side to anyone approaching the site from the sea.

Another feature of the plan that is characteristic of Minoan architecture is the arrangement of spaces. There are just eight or nine architecturally distinct groups of rooms-sets of rooms that communicate with each other but not with the other rooms except by crossing the central court. One example of this is the suite of three rooms in the northwest corner of the building. They do not communicate with the central court, but only with the five rooms or spaces to the east. This second group of spaces opens onto the central court, but does not communicate with the other rooms to the

northeast. Together, these two groups of rooms form the largest cluster within the building.

Whether each group of rooms corresponded to a social unit (such as a nuclear family) or to a functional distinction or both is unknown. In the case of both, each social unit would be responsible for particular jobs within the household. This in turn might be understood by considering the types of pottery and tools found in each room or in each cluster of rooms, and then looking for similarities and differences. We know that the finds from the building included domestic pottery such as cups, pots, and jugs; stone tools including obsidian blades; raw materials for stoneworking; hearths, a bronze axe, and a loomweight." Determining how these objects contributed to the overall functioning of the household will depend on understanding their contextual relationships-which will have to await the final publication of the site.

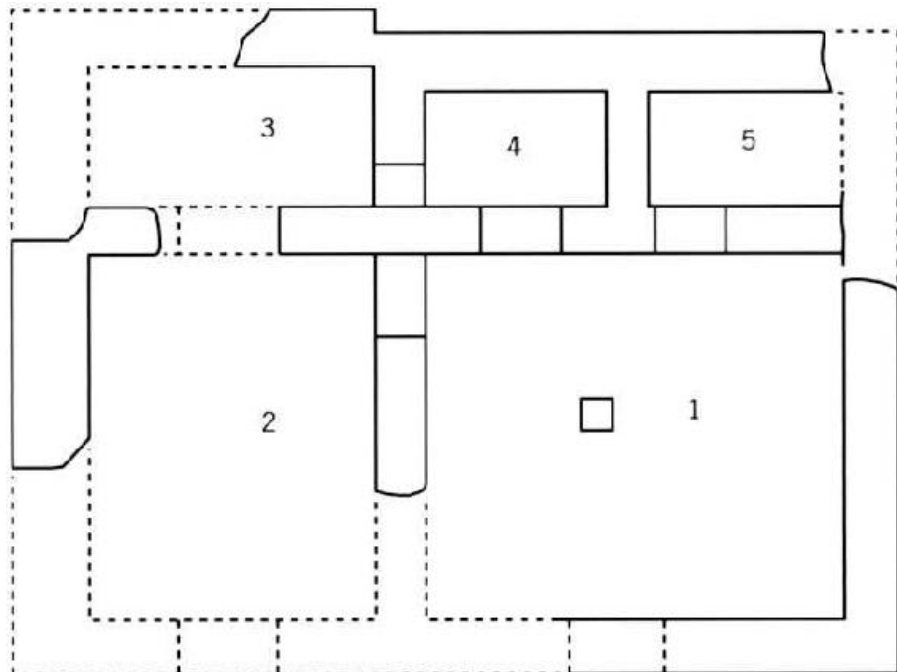
The vernacular tradition in Greece and Crete

Generally speaking, the designs and spatial organizations of buildings on Crete and on the Greek mainland contrast with each other in several ways. Most mainland structures are rectangular in plan, often with one side notably longer than the other, of which the megaron and the corridor house are notable variants. As we have seen above, the megaron form has a long history in most of the Aegean apart from Crete, only appearing there in the later Third Palace Period. Organized around a central long axis, mainland houses are most commonly entered on one short side, the principal interior spaces arranged in sequence along the central axis, as at Dimini or Lerna (see 8 and 16).

By contrast, Cretan structures, whether simple or complex in outline, tend towards the squarish, with no central interior axis. In plan, smaller buildings often consist of a square-within-a-square, occasionally with a pier or column at the centre of one room; an example is the small structure at Rousses [431, perhaps a religious establishment of some sort, possibly a warehouse facility for ceremonial implements rather than primarily a shrine or a residence.

43

Plan of the 'sanctuary' of Rousses, Middle Minoan III-Late Minoan I. In room 1, a fragment of stone double horns ('horns of consecration') was found. Room 2 contained fragments of many cups in a layer of black ash. Stone offering tables were also found in this building. The structural frame of the building, consisting of a square-within-a-square plan, was frequently used in Minoan vernacular architecture, with spatial proportions and sizes varying according to different functional needs.



Ritual practices

The west courts of Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia

The three main regional centres of the Protopalatial Period are located at Knossos in north-central Crete, Mallia about 37 km to the east, and Phaistos [44] in south-central Crete. Their size, architectural layout, and artefactual remains indicate that they served as important regional administrative centres, sites of public gathering, sites of public and private religious expression, and probably as places where goods and services could be exchanged. Each of these sites had substantial settlements dating to the Prepalatial Period, although Knossos was by far the largest of these. Architectural changes, rebuildings, repairs and reuse, and modern archaeologico-touristic reconstruction at Knossos" make its Protopalatial remains in some instances difficult to detect, understand, and interpret, and what is visible today is primarily a Neopalatial building.

Economic interpretations based on formal resemblances found at Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia and later fresco evidence have played a conflicting role in the interpretation of these buildings. Although they were superficially similar, the three major settlement compounds contained subtle differences in their earlier layouts which become more marked in the Neopalatial Period.

The palatial west court is a characteristic feature of the Minoan central urban compound which particularly undergoes variation in the presence and distribution of the architectural features typically associated with it.¹⁶ These features included raised triangular causeways or walkways and koulouras (pits) (see 36, 33)." In addition to these, there is a stepped theatral area at the Phaistos palace; all of these features were buried under Neopalatial Phaistos.

44

Aerial view of the palace at Phaistos, showing the compound's orientation towards Mount Ida on the north.



While it has been commonly accepted that the palaces' west courts served as gathering places for some kind of public function, the purpose of these public gatherings has been the subject of conflicting interpretations.¹ Some scholars would like to see these court and causeway systems as the sites of harvest festivals related to each palace's greater economic function as a centre for the (community?) storage of grain and other foodstuffs.² Others would like to see the west courts as the sites of ritual dancing among a 'Sacred Grove' of trees.³ Finally, the idea that the palaces served as centres for the redistribution of grain has recently come under strong criticism.²¹ Part of this lack of clarity may be due to the largely unquestioned assumption that each of these compounds carried out identical rituals and played identical roles in the local, regional, and island-wide economy, whereas it is also conceivable that palatial form and function were more autonomous.²²

The interpretation of the koulouras (pits) at Knossos and Phaistos as grain repositories is apparently based on formal analogy or comparison with Mallia. The Mallia structures are quite different from Phaistos and Knossos in actual appearance, although they do appear deceptively similar in plan. The apex of the triangular causeway on the west court at Mallia ends next to what the building's excavators termed eight silos.²³ It is widely accepted that these silos were used for grain storage.²⁴ The silos at Mallia differ from the pits at Knossos and Phaistos in being raised above ground, and four of them contain central pillars to support a roof which would have served to keep the grain dry. At Mallia, the end of the triangular causeway may have

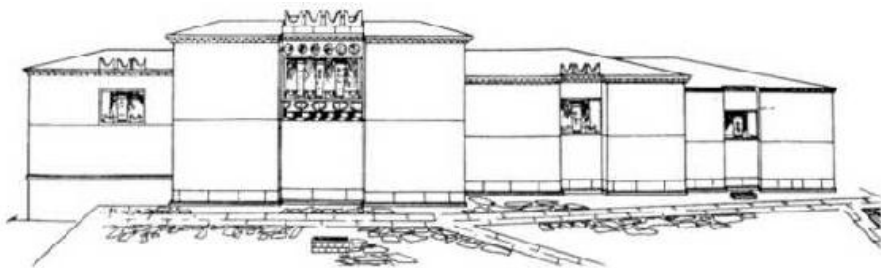
served as what one archaeologist called a `behavioural focus' directing an individual walking along the causeway to the silos.²ⁱ

A possible activity involving these features might have included a procession of individuals depositing grain in the silos or perhaps even receiving a ration. In the first scenario, farmers might be imagined as exchanging their produce for specialized craft items or imported goods, whereas in the second scenario we might envision craftspeople connected with the palace receiving a food ration in exchange for their productive labour. It has been suggested that formal rituals occurred at least twice a year: once in the spring when grain was brought to the palace after the harvest, and again in the autumn when seed was distributed for sowing. 16

In contrast to the arrangement at Mallia, the stone-lined pits at Knossos and Phaistos were sunk into the court and preserve no evidence of a roof or any kind of moisture-proofing sealant. The relationship of the causeway to the koulouras at Phaistos more closely resembles that at Mallia in that the apex of the causeway ends at the koulouras. However, if visitors followed the broader and more finely paved leg of the Phaistos causeway they would be led directly from the theatral area to the main south entrance of the First Palace.

45

Hypothetical reconstruction of the so-called 'Window of Appearances' in the west facade of the palace at Knossos, Middle Minoan III.



46

West facade of the Palace at Knossos before reconstruction.



At Knossos, the triangle created by the causeway is much larger and directs the visitor along a slightly different route. One leg of the causeway leads directly to the main south entrance of the palace. The other leg bypasses the koulouras, passing close to only one of them until it ends at the west facade of the building. One scholar favours a ceremony focusing on a Window of Appearances on the upper floor at Knossos 145, 461." Such royal windows of appearances were known later in Egypt. It was believed that the Knossian window would have been connected with an epiphany ritual (referring to the appearance of the image of a deity)." The leg of the causeway which passes the koulouras does not end in front of this conjectured window but, oddly for this interpretation, at a blank wall to the south of it. Another way of understanding movement along this causeway would be to see a procession walking from north to south in front of the west facade, then branching off toward the koulouras or proceeding straight into the palace, or perhaps both. Needless to say, such scenarios may be multiplied indefinitely.

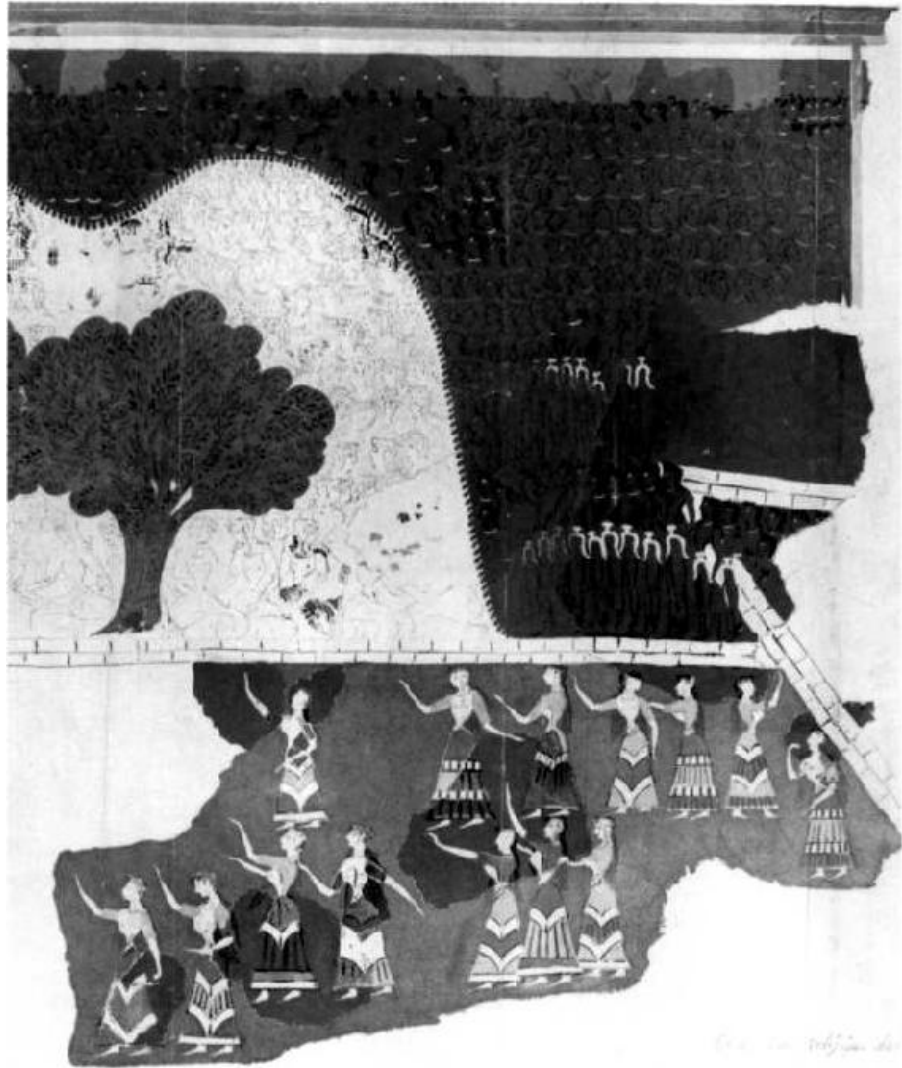
As indicated above, the interpretation of the koulouras at Knossos and Phaistos as grain repositories is based on superficial similarities with Mallia. The grain storage interpretation of these koulouras has been incorporated into modern economic interpretations of these Protopalatial palaces. For instance, it has been estimated that the koulouras at Knossos could hold a year's supply of wheat, enough to feed 1,000 people, while those at Phaistos could hold enough wheat to

feed 300 people." Some have seen the koulouras and the entire west court systems of Phaistos and Knossos as areas of controlled public activity, mediating between the city and the palace.')

Others have been tempted to see the koulouras functioning as planters for trees such as those depicted on the so-called Sacred Grove fresco from Knossos 1471." Based on an analogy with the Knossos fresco, one scholar also interpreted the koulouras at Phaistos as planters for trees which would serve as windbreaks and sunscreens for the exposed southern flank of the west middle court. Recent detailed studies of the koulouras have in fact called into question the idea that those at Phaistos and Knossos ever held grain.³² This conclusion was reached on the basis of ethnographic studies, replicative archaeological studies, and their structural unsuitability for keeping grain dry (i.e. no evidence of lining or capping). These studies indicate that rubbish pits or tree planters are far more reasonable interpretations.

47

Detail of miniature 'Sacred Grove' fresco of women dancing, Knossos Palace. The scene depicted most probably records events taking place in or around the palace. The contrast between the large, light-coloured seated women at the front of the audience, and the sea of smaller, darker-skinned standing males behind them is striking, the size differential suggesting a special status of the females as goddesses or priestesses. The women's polychrome flounced skirt or apron is depicted many times in Minoan and Theran frescoes.



Support for the interpretation that the koulouras were used as planters for trees may also come from the prevalence of tree iconography believed to be in ritual settings such as atop altars." Much of this iconography is found on Minoan seals, although the Sacred Grove (or Sacred Dance) fresco is the most often-cited example because its placement of trees in an architectural setting calls to mind the Knossian west court with its causeways, with spectators watching what some take to be ritual or ceremonial activity." Not least of the many problems involved with interpreting the Sacred Grove fresco in these ways, however, is the fact that it is very extensively restored.

There does not appear to be evidence for the three trees that are reconstructed. One scholar reconstructs two and even this number

could conceivably be reduced to one." Another problem is that the relationship of the location of the trees to the beginning of the triangular causeway on the fresco does not correspond to the actual location of the koulouras in relationship to the triangular causeway-although there is no reason to assume that Minoan fresco scenes were intended to accurately reproduce actual landscapes or urban settings. However, it seems that the placement of the tree(s) could conceivably be altered to enhance this relationship.

Paradoxically, using the west court as evidence to reconstruct the fresco would render the fresco less relevant as a piece of independent evidence from which to interpret the features of the west court. A recent account of artistic representations of Minoan architecture places the location of the Sacred Grove fresco in the theatral area at Knossos as this location would perhaps more suitably accommodate the placement of the crowd, and more closely match the depiction of the causeway in the fresco.¹⁶

The assembly and dancing depicted in the fresco has been interpreted as a ritual connected with an epiphany or appearance of a 'Great Goddess'. The connection of this ritual to a festival of the Goddess is largely linked to the subject matter and interpretation of frescoes from many other periods at Knossos. Accepting these connections would seem to imply that the function of Knossos remained unchanged and relatively fixed for a period of some 600 years, despite the many changes in the architecture and iconography of the building. While not out of the question, such an assumption may in fact raise more problems than it appears to solve.

One other possibility is that the pits at Knossos and Phaistos were used if not practically then at least symbolically for very short-term grain storage in ritual ceremonies connected with the local or regional harvest. Since the Sacred Grove fresco has been dated to around the very beginning of the Neopalatial Period, it remains a tantalizing possibility that at least some of the koulouras at Knossos may have been secondarily reused to hold trees after being primarily constructed for use in harvest festivals."

We have no difficulty accepting the idea of a 'harvest festival' at Mallia as discussed above. The situation at Knossos and Phaistos, however, is somewhat more complex and we have outlined here some possible alternatives. We also believe that it is significant that the west courts at Knossos and Phaistos underwent a number of changes at the end of the Old Palace Period, whereas the formally similar west court at Mallia seems to have been left relatively intact. Those changes were

as follows.

At the end of the Old Palace (Protopalatial) Period (MM III, c.1700 BC), the western court, causeway system, and most of the theatral area at the palace at Phaistos were paved over with a form of Minoan cement that raised the level of the court some 1.3 m." Phaistos was rebuilt and Knossos was remodelled (see Chapter 4), presumably after damage caused by an earthquake. In the rebuilding process at Phaistos, these features were not replaced. Any use of the causeways and koulouras for public ceremonies at Phaistos would have been discontinued and public ceremony would have centred on gatherings in the vicinity of the monumental propylon entry and a (now relatively featureless) west court (see Chapter 4).

The koulouras at Knossos were filled in with rubbish including earth, rubble stone, and sherds which were dated to near the end of the Old Palace Period. The pits were paved over shortly afterwards, although apparently the causeway itself remained in use. Based on their internal remains, Evans interpreted the koulouras as rubbish pits that were cleared out periodically. Many archaeologists, however, believe that the pits were too carefully laid out and built to be devoted to rubbish collection, but this may well be a distinctly modern perception. It is important to note that the discard habits and patterns of the Minoans have not yet been systematically studied; this issue is touched upon in Chapter 4. In light of this, Evans' idea that the koulouras functioned as rubbish pits also merits serious reconsideration.

The central building compound at Gournia (see 63) was built during the New Palace Period. Its abbreviated west court-which measures only approximately 5 x 15 m-is little more than a widening of the road. Although it is also lacking the combination of pits and causeway, an upright stone placed in a wall recess along the west court is interpreted as a baetyl or an aniconic (non-mimetic) image of a deity. A cupule or depression in a stone slab associated with this baetyl has recently been interpreted as a place to deposit offerings.' These features render the function of the west court at Gournia distinct from those at the larger palaces.

The changes that occur in the west courts of the Minoan palaces over time suggest that there were changes in the public functions and uses of these buildings between the end of the Old Palace Period and the beginning of the New Palace Period. Based on changes in the features, we might suppose that there was a change in ritual, or an introduction of new rituals, at every major centre except Mallia. These

changes might possibly be connected to economic functions.

One scholar has conjectured that food storage becomes increasingly centralized as storage facilities for food surplus are removed entirely from communal view to within the palace walls.⁴¹ It should be noted here that this interpretation depends on accepting the assumption that the koulouras functioned as granaries. If the koulouras in fact functioned as granaries, the Mallia silos may have been maintained because they were tightly incorporated within the architectural fabric of the palace proper, presenting a less ambiguous message of authority than the koulouras at Knossos and Phaistos.

Since one leg of the causeway at Knossos ended up in front of a monumental facade, it enhanced or reinforced an image of centralized control over an agricultural or other type of store held on the other side of a blank, imposing wall, inaccessible to those outside. The complicated system of setbacks and recesses, the blankness of the wall, and the careful working of the ashlar blocks that form the lower courses, set the west facades at Knossos, Mallia, Gournia, and Phaistos apart from the other three sides of the megastructure. This has led one scholar to speak of a 'monumental' function specific to this facade."

There is some indication that the economy of Minoan Crete was becoming more complex with the greater development of intra-island and international trade networks by the Neopalatial Period. A recent analysis of Minoan coarseware pottery indicates that storage jars, probably containing dry goods, and originating in east Crete in the region of Gournia, and amphoras (normally used to hold liquids), originating in central Crete, were turning up in other parts of the island." One of the centres of the more international side of this trade network was located at the Minoan coastal city today called Kato Zakro at the east end of the island (see 65).

It is not insignificant that at the palace of Kato Zakro, the main entrance is located on the northeast, whereas at Knossos it is located at the southern end of the west court. The west wing at Kato Zakro thus did not serve as the major public front of the palace (as was the case at Phaistos, Knossos, and Mallia), thereby lessening its importance. The workmanship of the stone blocks which comprise the west facade of Kato Zakro is in fact much less fine or elaborate in that the stone blocks are rough and unfinished. Those at the other palaces, notably Knossos, Mallia, and Phaistos, are the 'most finely built and composed'."

Judging by some of the unique features found at Kato Zakro, such as

its cistern and built wells, along with its carefully laid-out plan, it seems more than likely that those responsible for the construction of the building compound would have had the resources to construct a western facade as refined architecturally as those in central Crete. Yet evidently they did not bother. The impact of whatever type of court area originally existed at Kato Zakro would have been further diminished by the later addition of an annexe to the west wing which extended more than one-third the length of the west facade and increased the width of the west wing by approximately one-third.

Some of the architectural differences between Kato Zakro and the larger palaces may be attributed to its unique geographic location on the east coast of Crete, which makes it the closest Minoan port to the Levant. Six oxhide (copper) ingots and elephant tusks found in the west wing indicate a Minoan trade connection with the Near East. The main entrance to the Kato Zakro Palace is on the northeast, connected to the main northeast-to-southwest road which has been traced some 40 metres away from the building, and which may have led all the way to the northeastern end of the bay." This would have provided the Kato Zakro building with a physical link to the harbour. Here we might imagine processions of traders being ceremoniously welcomed to the palace with a cargo of raw materials or other trade goods from the east, which could be traded or trans-shipped to the rest of the island or the Greek mainland, or turned into luxury items which were then traded.

The roughly contemporary Bronze Age societies of the neighbouring regions-the Mycenaeans of mainland Greece, the Hittites of Asia Minor, and the Mesopotamian city states of the Near East-are more appropriate sources for comparative historical data than comparisons with later classical Greece because they formed part of a wider Bronze Age Mediterranean culture with shared technologies such as metallurgy, monumental architecture, writing and administration, wheelmade pottery, and textiles. This may also have included common or comparable religious beliefs related to human and animal fertility, possibly tied to a common set of economic practices based on settled agriculture and livestock raising.¹⁷ It has also been pointed out that both Aegean and Near Eastern societies emerged out of similar Neolithic farming cultures." Based on these characteristics, it has been plausibly argued that Bronze Age Crete can best be understood when viewed in the larger context and tradition of independent Near Eastern city states.'

Within this larger context we know that it was not uncommon for ritual practice to be focused on a particular city's tutelary deity

throughout the Bronze Age Near East as well as in classical Greece, a situation that increases the probability of some kind of cross-cultural development of such practices in Minoan civilization. It should be noted that some of the earliest evidence for Greek worship of localized deities is found in a Mycenaean text from Knossos where oil is being offered to Diktaian Zeus. It was suggested above that these changes, and differences in the public areas of the palaces, might well be connected with the performance of different rituals. These in turn might be connected to the worship of tutelary or local deities or the celebration of particular ceremonies connected with the economic life of the particular palace and town (such as regional and long-distance trade at Kato Zakro). The discussion of other Neopalatial architectural and design features which may provide insights into these questions will be taken up in detail in Chapter 4.

Petsophas

As we have seen, the Minoan palaces tend to have groups of rooms devoted to work, storage, ritual, and ceremonial gathering organized around a central court with an external court on the west. The central courts differ in size and in the types of architectural details present. However, a proportion of approximately 2:1 in the layout of these courts, and a north-south orientation-often on what has been interpreted as a sacred mountain (Ida at Phaistos, Troastolos at Kato Zakro, or Juktas at Knossos), tends to remain constant.

On these mountains as well as at peaks located below the mountain tops, archaeologists have found evidence that they served as informal gathering places for some forms of religious celebration. As the palaces gained status and power over time, these high gathering places became more formalized, suggesting palatial control. By the Neopalatial Period, this took the form of a built altar, terraces to level out the approach, and perhaps some storage rooms. The art works and other offerings left at these shrines became more elaborate as we shall see in the next chapter. These mountain places have come to be known as peak sanctuaries.

In the Old Palace Period, Petsophas was the site of a peak sanctuary associated with the large Minoan city of Palaikastro in east Crete (where no palace has been found).⁵⁰ Early peak sanctuaries such as Petsophas reveal evidence of fires, animal sacrifice, and communal feasting that took place within a defined precinct. The importance of Petsophas is indicated by the many terracotta figurines [148] found both within its enclosure walls as well as amidst the rocks and

crevices of the surrounding terrain.

The figurines tended to be rather small, 10-15 cm in height. Protopalatial male figurines were often depicted with slender waists and with hands folded on the chest, a gesture more commonly made by Neopalatial female figurines. To this general scheme, the artist might add details in the form of a loincloth, a belt with a dagger, jewellery, with schematic ears, nose, and other anatomical features formed out of clay pellets. Female figurines also tended to be depicted with slender waists and a flaring bell-shaped skirt. A fan-shaped headdress sometimes adorns the head, with other features modelled schematically, like those of the males.



town of Palaikastro. Middle Minoan figurines such as these were common offerings at peak sanctuaries. The two shown here are making gestures common among Protopalatial figurines.

Female gestures are distinct from those of males, the arms extended either outward or upward, with the hands sometimes bent towards the face. The more complex figurines were made from several pieces of clay and had more details indicated. A marked tendency to depict females in a more simplified manner than males carries over into the bronze figurines in the following period. Other figurines such as cattle and the occasional bird also occur, as do votive limbs, vessels, and even an altar. Offerings of this type might indicate symbolic gift giving or a desire to receive aid for some affliction.

The rather uniform modelling of the features of these figurines, and the simple and swift rendering of details in brown, black, and white, were seen by early scholars as examples of folk art or as crude versions of finer works. It had been assumed by some that their function as votive objects may have taken precedence over their appearance or conformity to a particular aesthetic; but in any case such qualitative distinctions belong to our own times and values.

Summary

The Protopalatial Period was evidently an exciting time of change and social and cultural development on Crete. The architectural experimentation we saw at the conclusion of the Early Bronze Age was coming to an end, with more and more common design patterns and structural regularities finding their way into Minoan building, despite unusual and unique structures such as the Prepalatial buildings at Ayia Photia and Chamaizi. The palaces were emerging as full-scale administrative, commercial, ceremonial, and religious centres. As we will see in the forthcoming chapters, the sealings which played such a critical role in this administrative structure are becoming a distinctive art form in their own right, one which has provided us with intriguing snapshots and glimpses of Minoan social and religious practices and beliefs. At this time also, the Minoans were placing an increasing emphasis on settling coastal sites, while older inland centres (such as Monastiraki) appear to diminish in importance. These developments accelerate in the following Neopalatial Period, the subject of the next chapter.



The Second Palace Period

4

Public art, private art, and the palatial architectural style

A century of discoveries in Crete and the Aegean, and an increase in comparative studies of Minoan culture in relation to the wider world of the societies of the eastern Mediterranean, has altered and enriched our understanding of Minoan art, architecture, and cultural life in ways that could not have been predicted a generation ago.

During the twentieth century, most archaeologists assumed that the Minoan palaces were the residential seats of powerful local or regional rulers ('kings' or 'priest-kings'), who, in addition to controlling often very extensive manufacturing and trading enterprises, were also in control of the religious or ceremonial life of the communities they governed. Understood as the centres of political, social, religious, and economic life, the Minoan palaces seemed to be a dim, archaic mirror of the monarchical world of early modern Europe-or at least of Sir Arthur Evans' late Victorian England-precious evidence, for some, of 'the first Europe' and of tangible cultural continuity in Europe from a time contemporary to that of the great pharaonic civilization of Egypt.

Today it is clear that the term 'palace' is problematic, and its use may have misled us as much as it may have helped us to understand the complexity and distinctiveness of these quite remarkable Bronze Age structures. The fact of the matter is that we do not know for certain just how the great central building compounds of Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia (and the comparably conceived and designed structures in smaller towns such as Kato Zakro, Gournia, Zominthos, Makrygialos, and Petras) were actually used.' Nor is it yet clear what exactly their relationships were with the towns and regions in which they stood, or indeed if such relationships were constant or constantly changing.

For a very long time, specialists have sought to understand these structures, the cities and towns which they served or dominated, and Minoan society more broadly, within interpretative frameworks more

suitable to our own modern circumstances, where (to take one example) distinctions or contrasts between sacred and secular practices and forms may have greater pertinence. At the same time, because the Bronze Age Greek mainland was understood at the end of the nineteenth century to be a land dominated by powerful local or regional leaders (actually named Homeric heroes like Agamemnon, Atreus, or Nestor) based in heavily fortified castles (the Mycenaean citadels; see Chapter 5), it was reasonably assumed by some that Bronze Age Crete was politically and economically similar in organization, if rather dissimilar (to many observers, superior) in its arts, architecture, and urban design.

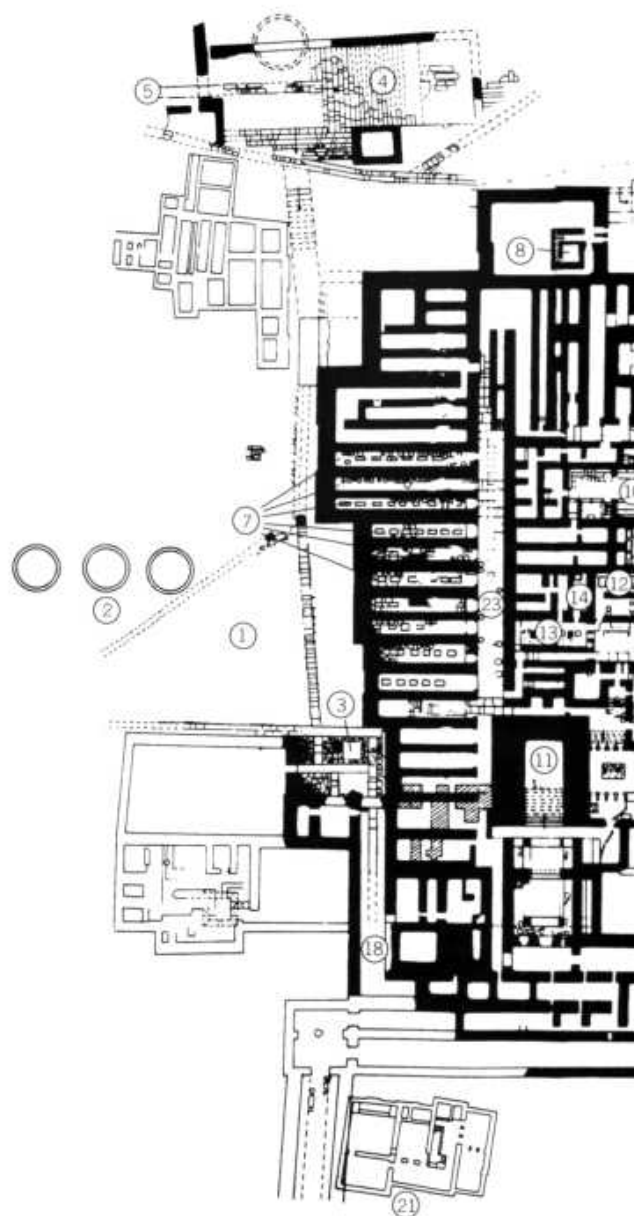
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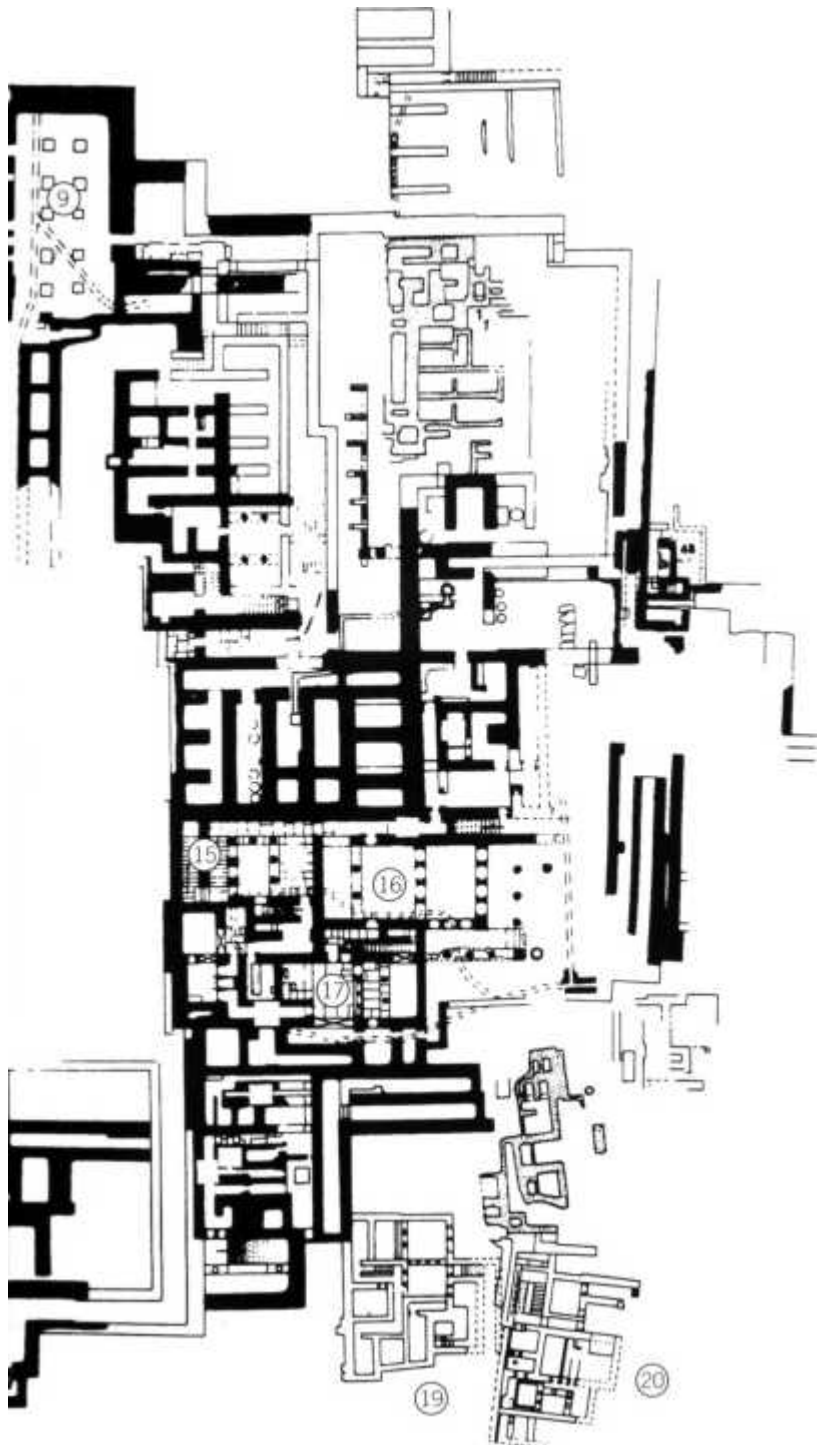
49

Plan of the palace at Knossos, Neopalatial or Second Palace Period. The palace is the largest of the Minoan palaces excavated. The site on which it stands was more or less continually inhabited from the Neolithic to the Roman Period.

Key

- 1 Causeway
- 2 Pits (First Palace)
- 3 Southwest entrance
- 4 'Theatral' area
- 5 'Royal' road
- 6 North entrance
- 7 Storage magazines
- 8 Northwest basinal basin
- 9 Hypostyle Hall
- 10 Throne room
- 11 Stairway (conjectural)
- 12 'Temple' repositories
- 13 Pillar crypts
- 14 Vat room
- 15 Grand Staircase
- 16 'Hall of the Double Axes'
- 17 Smaller hall
- 18 Corridor of Processions
- 19 House of the 'Chance Screen'
- 20 South East House
- 21 South House
- 22 Tripartite shrine
- 23 Corridor of Magazines





An overview of the Minoan palaces was provided in Chapter 3. As we shall see, by the Neopalatial Period each 'palace' and 'villa' was conceived as a great work of art in its own right, and-whether they

were monasteries, palaces, factories, trading headquarters, or community centres (or at one or another time one or more of these)-the Minoan palaces were the most extraordinary works of art of the entire Aegean Bronze Age.

The Second Palaces: Knossos, Phaistos, Gournia, and Kato Zakro

Knossos

As the site of the largest and most famous of the Minoan palaces, Knossos may also have been the most powerful city on the island for much of the Middle and Late Bronze Age [49]. Its history as a palace is extremely complex and is still in part poorly understood. The site of Kephala on which it stands was more or less continually inhabited from the Neolithic to the Roman Period. In contrast to Phaistos, where two major palace building periods are clearly defined both materially and by design (see Chapter 3 above, and below), the Palace of Knossos was a single building with a long, complicated history of repair, renovation, and rebuilding, some of it large scale, some of it minor, all in response to destructions caused by earthquakes and fires.

Although to speak of a Knossian 'Second Palace' may be a misnomer, there was earthquake destruction at the transition from the Middle to Late Minoan ceramic style periods (sometime in the seventeenth century BCE) of sufficient magnitude to precipitate an extensive rebuilding of the palace. This was followed by destructions and rebuildings in the Late Minoan IA and IIIA Periods. The building visible today is an amalgam of these Late Bronze Age reconstructions of the original (nineteenth century BCE) Middle Bronze Age building, made more or less permanent by early twentieth-century CE cement restorations and reinterpretations in the form of those reconstructions.

Most parts of the newer Knossian Palace that are visible today were constructed in two stages, in the Middle Minoan III and Late Minoan IA Periods. To this time (roughly the seventeenth century BCE) belong the monumental west facade, with its indented and projecting segments of modular proportions; the major entrance porticoes on the southwest, north and northeast, the ceremonial rooms, including the pillar crypts and Tripartite Shrine in the west-central block, between the west magazine area and the central court; antecedents of the later (LM IIIA) Throne Room complex at the north end of the west-central block (see 51); and, on the east, the Hall of the Double Axes, Queen's megaron (see 52), and the monumental stairway connecting these lower-level halls with the central court.

Both Knossos and Mallia include pillar crypts [50] located at or near the centre of their western wings. Incised in both cases with double-

axe (labrys) marks, the Knossian crypts are adjacent to a room which contained buried objects thought to be part of the foundation deposit of the original palace (the Vat Room deposit). The significance of the centrality of these rooms has been the subject of some discussion; they are positioned in a manner that also echoes the central rooms with benches at Phaistos.² At the same time, the pillar crypts of Knossos and Mallia are closely associated with storage areas, and it may have been the case that their ceremonial or ritual functions encompassed passages to, through, or past those quarters.

The illustration of the Throne Room shows the very famous reconstructed wall fresco on the north wall, with griffins (fantastic half-lion, half-bird creatures) flanking the seat [511]. Such a heraldic, flanking convention is known throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Near East from the fourth millennium onward, and, if the Knossian example is comparable to non-Minoan ones, we may interpret the position of the fantastically flanked seat itself as a supernaturally powerful place: whoever sat here would be protected by these symbolic beasts, and partake of their special powers.

50

The East Pillar Crypt with incised /abrys(double-axe) signs, Palace of Knossos.



52

Dolphin fresco from the so- called 'Queen's megaron' in the east wing of the palace at Knossos, Neopalatial Period. This photograph was taken after the restoration of the fresco; it was found in many pieces in a nearby light-well.

The Throne Room also incorporated a sunken chamber on the south side of the room, accessed by a small stairway, opposite the throne. These lustral basins occur in many Minoan palaces and villas, and

their function has long been the subject of debate among archaeologists and art historians. These sunken basins at Knossos (and elsewhere) are empty of accoutrements, in most cases. There is a parapet or low balustrade on one or more sides, suggesting that whatever took place in the basins was observable or could be directed and overseen from above.

53

Pier-and-door partition system or polythyron (multiple doorway). Common in many Minoan buildings during the Late Bronze Age, and also found in houses and shrines on Thera, these multiple-door hall systems allowed complex seasonal and functional alterations of interior space, light, and ventilation. In larger villas and palaces they often occur in pairs, sometimes at right angles to each other, and in association with verandas and light-wells.

Most observers concur that the basins were significant ceremonially or ritually, and the recent discovery of examples on the island of Thera, accompanied by wall paintings apparently depicting initiation rites (in one spectacular case, a puberty initiation ceremony for adolescent girls, see below), appears to confirm these conjectures. Some have seen these sunken chambers as antecedents of the secluded room known as an *adyton* in later Hellenic Greek temples and shrines. At Knossos, lustral basins also occur near building entrances (on the northwest and southeast) in the First Palace as well as here in the Throne Room.

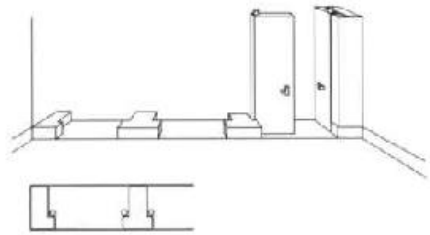
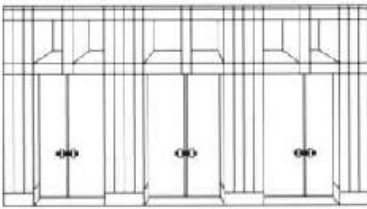
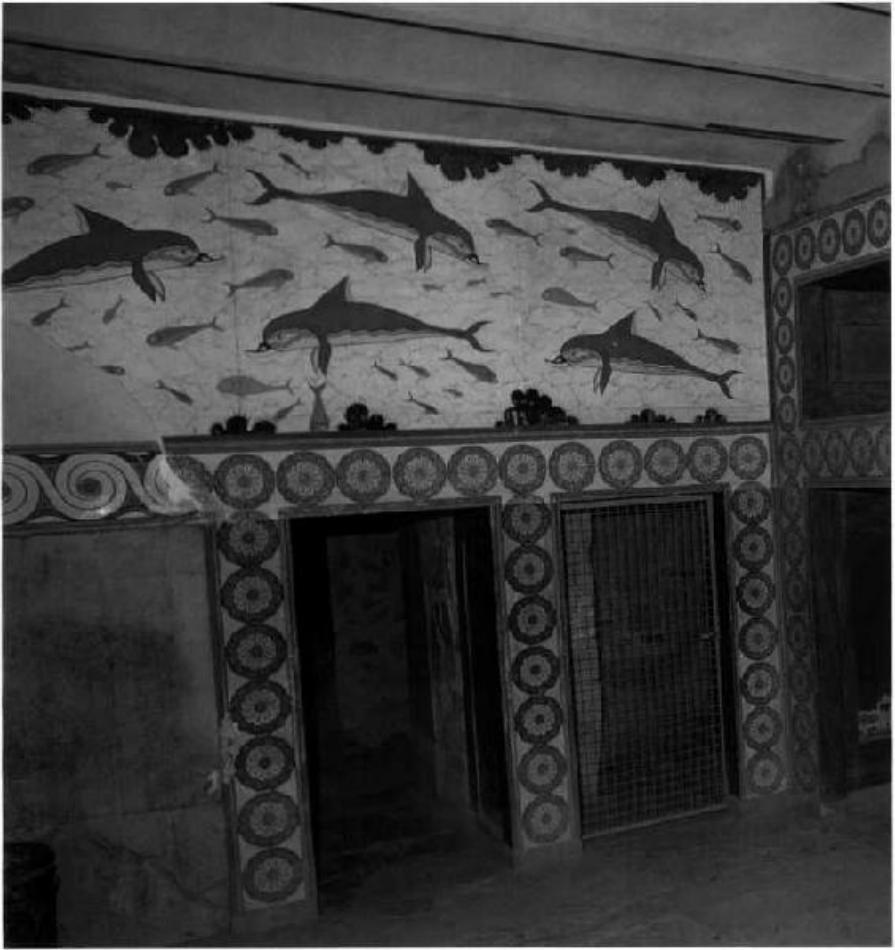
The great hall systems on the eastern side of the palace, long taken to be domestic quarters distinguished along gender lines—the larger inevitably being men's (or the king's) chambers, the smaller the women's (or, here, the Queen's *megaron*)—may very well have been palace offices. They may have served as reception halls for important visitors and as meeting chambers for city or palace officials, or for groups of individuals engaged in one or another facet of the running of the place—the supervision of its stores and manufactures, the transshipment and dissemination of textiles, foodstuffs, produce, raw materials, religious articles and so on. By night, they may have doubled as sleeping areas, with long since disintegrated cushions laid out for this purpose. Such hall systems often occur in pairs, with larger and small units either parallel or perpendicular to each other (see Phaistos or Hagia Triadha), or (in the case of the palace at Zakro, below) separated by a courtyard. The Knossian Queen's *megaron* [52] is composed of the conventional components: a hall surrounded by windows and exposed to the elements, a forehall, and a

light-well. The substitution of windows for pier-and-door partitions (PDPs) [531 distinguishes it from the larger Hall of the Double Axes.

51

The so-called 'Throne Room' in the palace at Knossos, Second Palace Period. This photograph was taken after its restoration by Evans, and shows griffins flanking the stone seat along the north wall. Note that the original palm trees have been replaced by papyrus.



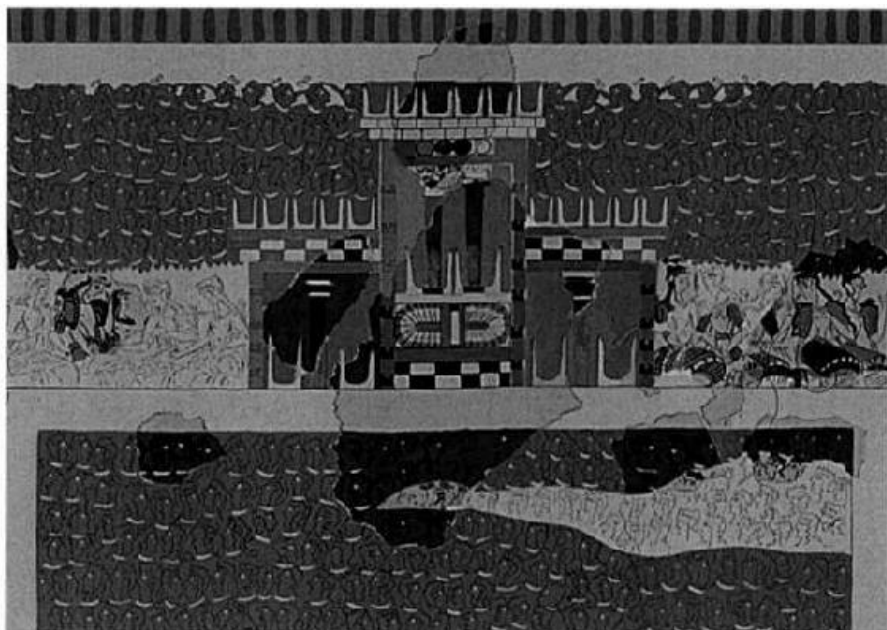


One of the more remarkable and intriguing of the painting fragments known collectively as the 'miniature frescoes' found in the palace ruins is the scene—largely reconstructed—that has come to be called the Grandstand fresco [54]. Probably fallen from an upper storey room in the building's west wing, it depicts parts of a horned-roof tripartite pillared shrine with seated women on either side, all surrounded by a sea of male faces. The shrine is of a type well known in Minoan art, as

is the women's bare-breasted, flounced-skirt costume. Some see the Grandstand fresco as illustrating a large community scene in a palatial or city court-possibly the Knossian central court, at the exact centre of whose western facade was uncovered the foundations of a tripartite pillared niche (the 'Tripartite Shrine').

54

Grandstand fresco, palace at Knossos, Second Palace Period. Note the tripartite pillared shrine with roof decorations in the form of double horns (so-called 'horns of consecration'). The broad white strip below evidently marks out a courtyard, most likely the palace's central court. This type of shrine is well known in Minoan art.





55a

The so-called 'Mother of the Mountains' sealing, found in a deposit of similar sealings in the Knossos Tripartite Shrine area. The woman is standing on a mountain or hilltop and is flanked by antithetic lions. Behind her is part of a building, perhaps a reference to the palace. Compare this with the central part of the Thera fresco in 80, where a woman is seated on a raised dais flanked by a griffin. Common also in the contemporary Near East, this kind of hierarchical tableau with a raised figure flanked by powerful animals frequently signifies divine status.

The Tripartite Shrine has been seen as situated in a close relationship with the storerooms based on its location on the west side of the central court.; This is reinforced by its approximate alignment with the pillar crypts, another feature regularly associated with storage. The deposit of sealings associated with the Tripartite Shrine provides an additional symbolic link to the storage and exchange of commodities. Most of these sealings depict the so-called 'Mother of the Mountains': a female, presumably a goddess, standing atop a scale mountain (a Near Eastern convention) and extending a staff in the so-called 'gesture of command' [55a].⁴ She is flanked by antithetic lions (a position in other illustrations occupied by a central pillar or sacred tree), possibly signifying her special (most likely divine) status. Compare this to the central portion of the Thera fresco in 80 below,

with its seated goddess between two fantastic creatures. Here she is faced by a worshipper making the so-called 'Minoan salute'. The placement of the 'goddess' on a mountain top serves as a symbolic reference to Minoan peak sanctuaries while the columnar structure adorned with 'horns' may refer to the palace.

The 'Master Impression' sealing, Chania, Late Minoan I-II. This important clay sealing depicts a series of multistorey buildings set in a rocky landscape, and crowned with a series of double horns. On the highest roof stands a male figure (a god or ruler) with a staff, in a pose identical to the 'Mother of the Mountains' figure. To some observers, the horns on the roofs resemble beehiveshaped granaries. The town is set within a rocky landscape by the sea, in a manner resembling those in the Flotilla fresco from Akrotiri on Thera, seen in part in 77 below.

Other scenes reconstructed from fragments of the miniature frescoes appear to show similar activities, but in different places or against different backgrounds. The most famous shows a scene of women dancing before a group of similarly costumed seated women, again surrounded by sea of male figures, all near trees and raised causeways, in what may be allusions to the Knossian west court (see 47 above). These and similarly colourful and vibrant scenes may record types of ceremonies characteristic of the Knossian city communities during the Second Palace Period, in a manner not unlike the remarkable records of ceremonial and ritual practice seen in the more recently discovered and well-documented and reconstructed wall frescoes of Akrotiri on the island of Thera, discussed later in this chapter.

As we shall see, not a few familiar and widely published Minoan paintings or fresco

fragments are controversial, their reconstruction often extremely conjectural. A good example of this is the collection of relief fragments that Evans called a 'Priest-King' [561]. The Priest-King was found at different levels in a basement room below what has been reconstructed as the North-South Corridor leading from the Corridor of the Processions (see Chapter 5) to the central court. The original remains include a crown of lilies normally associated with Minoan sphinxes, the upper torso which preserves a lock of hair, the lily necklace, and clenched right hand brought back diagonally across the chest, a small part of the left arm, most of the kilt and cod-piece, the left leg excluding the foot, and a fragment of the right thigh, all rendered in low relief against a red background.

Evans' initially assigned the fragments to three different figures, but later restored them as a single figure leading a sacred animal. As the Minoans adopted the Egyptian convention for indicating gender differences in wall paintings, that is, red to indicate males, white to indicate females, Evans and others have taken it for granted that the figure was a male, making the assumption that the fragments had faded from their original 'reddish brown'.

This account has become increasingly unsatisfactory to Minoan archaeologists over the past 30 years. Although a few still cling to the belief that the Priest-King represented a crowned girl athlete leading a bull in a ritual procession prior to participation in bull sports, others suggest that he is standing in a more commanding or confrontational pose based on the observation that the lily crown is worn only by sphinxes and priestesses, but never by men."

The so-called 'Priest-King' fresco and new reconstruction, Palace of Knossos, Second Palace Period. The first of these two figures shows the fresco as it was originally restored, a striding young prince wearing a feathered crown. Only the crown, the torso, and most of the left leg are original. It has recently been suggested that the fragments used to restore the Priest-King do not belong to the same figure. The

drawing next to this is a recent reconstruction, suggesting that the torso of the Priest-King belongs to a figure with a commanding gesture, not unlike those in 55a and 55b. The actual gender of the person remains open to question.



This more recent reconstruction is based, in part, on the so-called 'Master Impression' (55b) a sealing from the site of Chania in west Crete.' Here, a male figure standing atop an architectural facade holds a staff in his outstretched arm, while his other arm is bent behind him with his hand resting in the small of his back.

However, the evidence remains too fragmentary for a definitive restoration of the Priest-King and the gender of the Priest-King remains open to question. After all, the Eighteenth Dynasty Egyptian female king, Hatshepsut (c.1503-1483 BCE) inserted herself visually and symbolically into the dominant discourse by having herself depicted as a male king, the god Osiris, and as a male sphinx. Framed within this larger Bronze Age context, it is not unreasonable to suggest

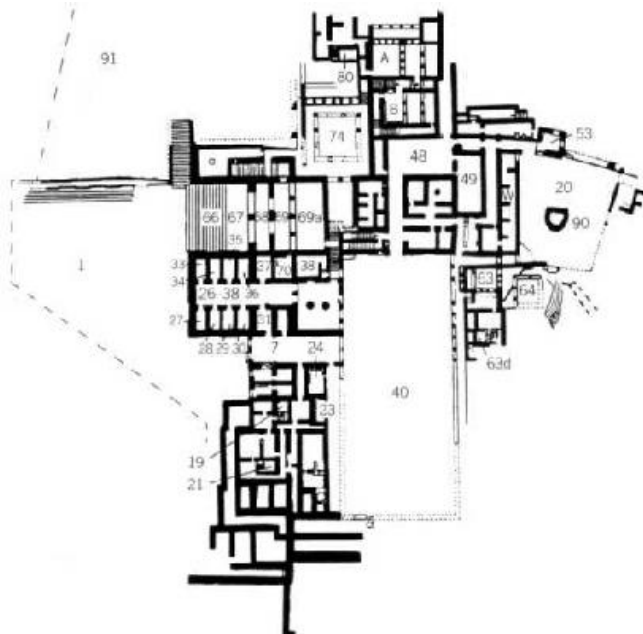
that the Priest-King was in fact a Priestess-Queen having herself depicted as a male, a bull leaper, and a sphinx thematically linked by the lily necklace and the lily crown. A male appropriating female symbols of fair skin and a lily crown to legitimize patriarchal ascension is another possibility.'

It appears that in this Second Palace Period, Minoan buildings were extensively and richly painted with frescoes depicting important or characteristic scenes of daily and ceremonial life: scenes which in some cases may have taken place in or near the areas of the paintings themselves. In this regard, Minoan visual practices share characteristics of fresco and relief decoration seen throughout the Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, and most notably in Egypt, where the full realization of certain important buildings such as tombs or temples included painted or relief scenes recording-and thus making permanent and perpetual-the activities they contained at a specific ritual time or cyclically over time.

Phaistos

The plans and functional organizations of Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia are similar enough to suggest that they were initially designed and executed for each community by the same team or guild of professional planners and builders, or at least by teams with an agenda shared by their different client cities. Each of them appear to have been functionally conceived, and architecturally designed and harmonically laid out in very similar ways, suggesting an island-wide programmatic reorganization of each of the three cities in the early phases of the Second Palace Period. Extensive studies of the palace remains in recent years indicate that, despite local variations in the placement, size, or number of some functional components, the major palaces superficially mirrored each other's organization, and to a greater extent, appearance.

Key
1 West Court
7 Main west entry corridor
19, 21 Lustral basins
20 East Court
23, 24 Benchad reception rooms
26-38 Magazine block
40 Central Court
48, 49 Auxiliary courts
53 Northeast entrance
63, 64 East PDP Hall
53d Lustral basin
66-69 Grand Stair or theatral area and Ceremonial Propylon Entry Way
70 Porter's Lodge
74 Peristyle Court
80 Northwest Lustral Basin
90 Smelting Chamber
91 Upper West Court
A PDP Hall
B Smaller columned hall
W Workshops



57

Plan of the Second Palace of Phaistos. Some First Palace walls were incorporated into the Second Palace. The new compound exhibits features common to many major Minoan buildings; a pillared hall north of the central court, pier-and-door partition halls on the east and northwest, sunken lustral basins on east, northwest, and west, the block of storage magazines on the west, and the north-south alignment of the central court. The numbering of the rooms here follows that of the original excavators.

At Phaistos, after the destruction of the First Palace discussed in Chapter 3, a new building was erected on a cement platform laid over the remains of the earlier one, and the level of the older west court was raised, covering part of the original theatral area on the north side [571]. The new building presents a strikingly different appearance from Knossos and Mallia in the reorganization of its magazine storage area on the west; the construction of a large stepped platform (the Grand Stair) with a pier-and-door partition screen; and the construction of several Minoan hall systems (complete with lustral basins) on the northwest and east and the unusual addition of two more lustral basins on the southwest. What existed of the south wing is unknown because this entire section of the compound fell over the promontory cliff probably sometime in late antiquity.

The very finely built northern hall system consists of two parallel

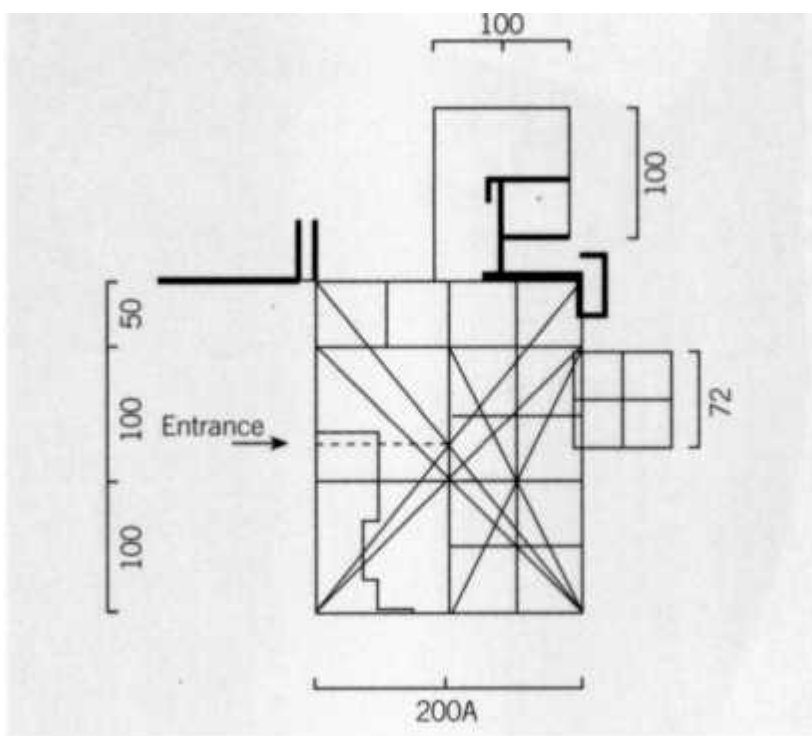
halls, a larger and smaller one, reminiscent of the two halls in the east wing of Knossos (the Hall of the Double Axes and the Queen's megaron), or of the double hall systems at Kato Zakro, Mallia, and Haghia Triadha. As at Knossos, the smaller hall is exposed to the elements.

The ceremonial centre of the Second Palace was near the centre of the west wing of the building, continuing what appears to have been the situation earlier at Phaistos, and at Knossos and Mallia. The hypothetical planning grid in 58 indicates the original modular square of 200 Minoan units (identical to the earlier palace and to the other two major palaces), out of which the east half was given over to the central court, and the west half to the west wing with its benched meeting rooms and lustral chambers. The central axis of the plan replicates the incised double-axe mark so frequently attested on the walls and pillars of the Minoan palaces and villas (see 50). The thick dark lines in our figure indicate which First Palace walls were incorporated into the new plan, which, it appears, served as base-lines in the layout of the new compound.

An interesting design feature of the Second Palace is the deeply indented west facade articulated out of the square planner's grid. This finely built ashlar masonry facade was harmonically articulated, its sections measuring, from south to north, 21, 34, 55, and 89 Minoan units, replicating in a literal fashion the proportions of the Fibonacci (or golden section) proportional series (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 ...), known and widely employed both in Crete and contemporary Egypt.¹¹ Similar -though more simply articulated-proportional schemes were used in designing the monumental west facades at Knossos and Mallia, suggesting the importance of the palatial west walls as the more public or ceremonial front facades of these buildings.

58

Central planning grid of the Second Palace of Phaistos. The builders of the second compound used the extant northern walls of the First Palace (shown in thick black) as reference lines for the new modular layout.



59

Grand Staircase of the Second Palace of Phaistos. The stair may also have served as a site for ceremonial activities.



60

Floral-style jug with a naturalistic rendering of wild grasses. Second Palace of Phaistos, Late Minoan IB, height 29 cm. The dark-onlight floral-style pottery begins in LM IA, replacing the earlier Kamares-style polychrome light-on-dark ware.



The Phaistos Grand Staircase [591 may not have been a major monumental entrance to the Second Palace as much as a site for some more outward-oriented ceremonial activities, possibly replacing the

now mostly buried old theatral area to the west. At its east end is a light-well, and a small door in the southeast corner, connecting this section with a narrow stairway leading down towards the magazine area and central court, and up to a fine peristyle court adjacent to the second level of the northern hall system. The (missing) room or rooms carried over the Grand Staircase's pillars and piers may well have served as an observation platform for west or central court activities, although their actual function remains a matter of speculation.

The jug [60] and stirrup jar [61a] are very fine examples of Minoan pot making and pot painting, and also illustrate a continuing fascination with the detailed and lively depiction of flora and fauna. The vivid naturalism of such paintings has long been set against the schematic depiction of similar motifs in Mycenaean painting [61b], the contrast commonly having been used by archaeologists and art historians of the earlier part of the century as emblematic of qualitative distinctions between not only the painters but also the peoples of Crete and the mainland.

Gournia

Excavated a century ago by Harriet Boyd Hawes, the central building compound at Gournia (near the coast of the Bay of Mirabello in east Crete) occupies the top of a hill on whose slopes was a modest town where several dozen households were devoted to farming and fishing, and the manufacture of locally consumed commodities. Because the building contained a number of features in common with, or appearing to be miniature versions of, those of the three major palaces, Gournia has long been referred to as a palatial compound, assumed to be the residence of the town's ruler or ruling family.

61a

Minoan stirrup jar with octopus in the so-called 'marine style' from Gournia, east Crete, Late Minoan IB.

61b

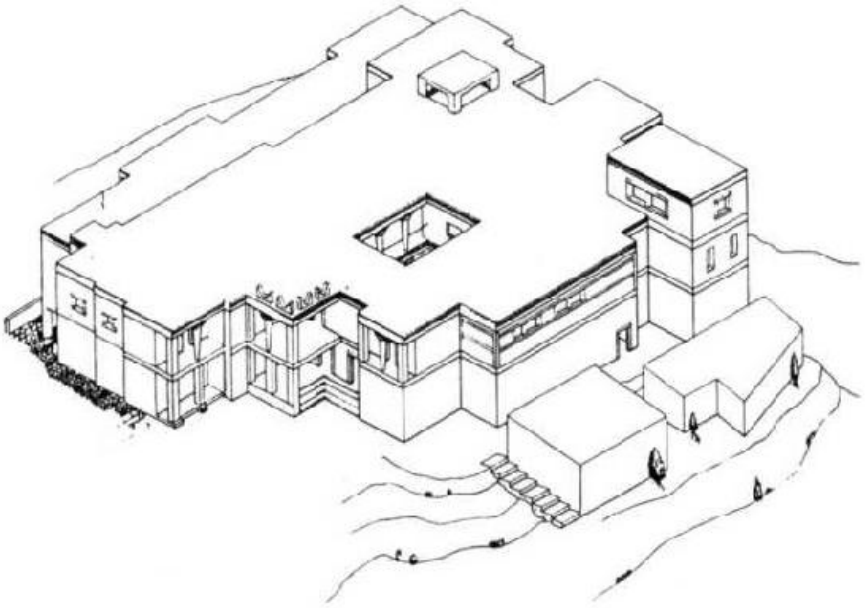
Post palatial stirrup jar with octopus from a tomb at Tourloti, east Crete, LM I I IC. In the early days of Aegean archaeology, the stark stylistic differences in the rendering of these octopuses was taken as a marker of ethnic differences between (Minoan) Cretans and (Mycenaean) mainlanders.



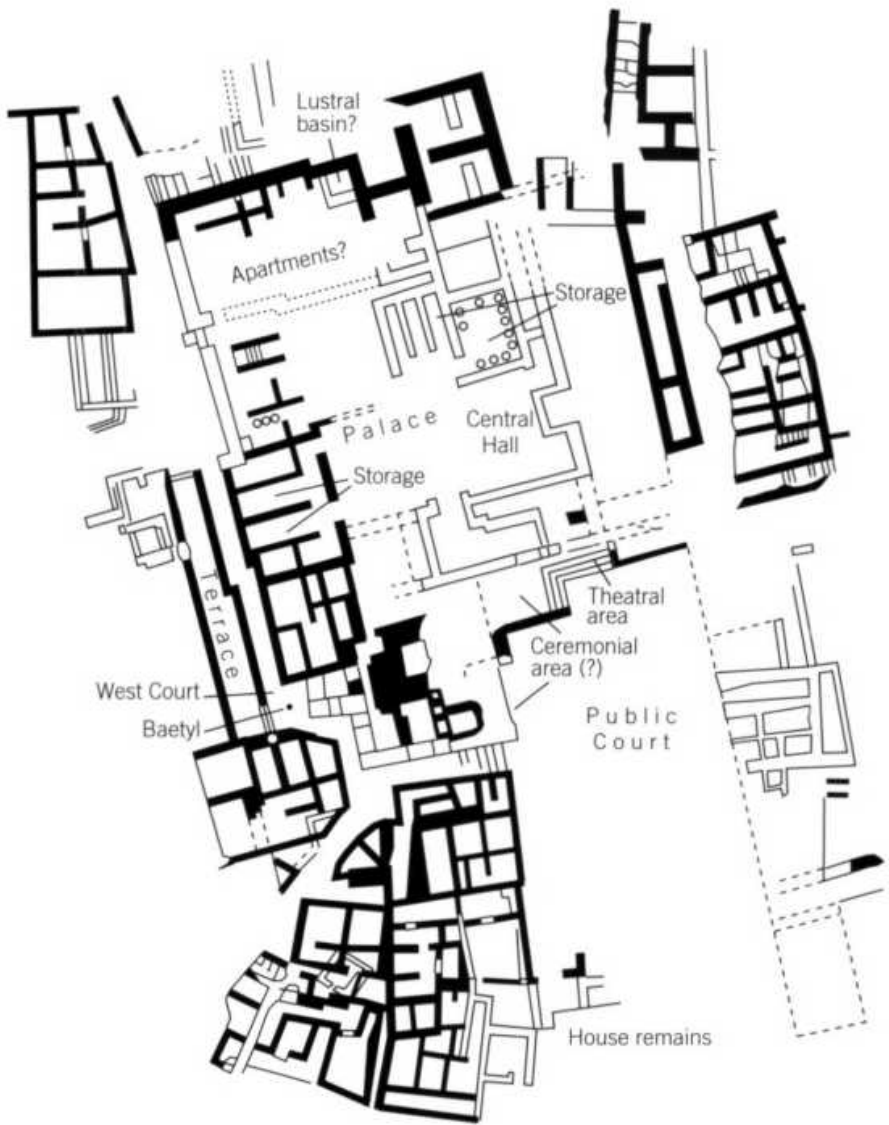


62

Restored view of the palace at Gournia from the southeast, based on a recent detailed reexamination of the building's remains.



Hawes' plan of the palace at Gournia and surrounding area, Second Palace Period. Note the palatial features such as the indented west facade fronting on a small western court, storage magazines on the west, and the small stepped area or viewing platform fronting on the large rectangular court.



About one-tenth the size of Knossos, the palace at Gournia fronts on a large rectangular court to the south, and contains a small paved west court; ashlar-block west facade in two sections of the building; a line of rectangular magazines on the west; traces of halls within, and what is evidently a small ceremonial area fronting on the northwest corner of the large court [62, 631. Illustrated here are a contemporary two-storied reconstruction view from the southeast and the original excavators' plan. The ceremonial area is shown surmounted by a horned roof, and to its left is a small pillared room opening on to the public court or town square, reminiscent of the Tripartite Shrine area on the west facade of the Knossian central court. Near this was found

a kernos stone, possibly for the deposit of offerings. Except for the area of the larger court, the Gournia palace is closely surrounded by the houses of the town.

This Second Palace Period compound clearly adapts features common in its larger counterparts to local conditions, suggesting once again a shared system of formal elements in Minoan architectural and urban design. Here these features can be seen reduced to their most basic forms, whilst maintaining relationships amongst them that are regionally distinct. Thus, despite its very constricted area, the west frontage consists of a paved court—really a widening of a city street; ashlar treatment of the wall fronting on the paved area; with storage magazines along this west section. Also, there is a ceremonial area fronting on a large rectangular court—which here, rather than being entirely internal to the structure, is an interface between the compound and the rest of the town. The large court is longer north-south than east-west, as at all the other palaces, and, although much of the interior heart of the compound has eroded away, having occupied the highest part of the hill, enough remains to indicate that it most probably contained hall systems and light-wells.

Gournia illustrates an important feature of Minoan design: the fact that what is common to Minoan buildings is not only the presence of certain formal features, but also, and equally, their topological arrangements or positions relative to each other, despite differences in size, or orientation, placement of doorways and corridors, and possibly also in usage. Certain relationships, in other words, seem to remain constant despite variations in form, size, materials, and other qualities. This theme is discussed in more detail below.

Kato Zakro

Discovered some three decades ago at the southern end of a Minoan town already known for a century, the Palace of Kato Zakro has yielded many impressive finds, and has added a great deal to our knowledge of Minoan Crete's foreign relations, for it is clear that the town was an important sea-trading city [641]. About twice the size of the Gournia compound, Kato Zakro lies approximately 100 m from the present-day shore of a fine protected bay, at the east end of what today is the flood-plain of the great gorge of Zakro cut deeply into the mountains to the west.

The plan of the building is at first glance fairly canonical [651]: it reveals a north-south aligned central court, approximately 100 x 40 m,

fronted by a partial colonnade on the north and east; a pillared hall (possibly a kitchen) on the north side similar to the hypostyle halls at Knossos and the First Palaces of Phaistos and Mallia; very fine double hall systems to the east and west of the central court and a series of storage rooms, workshops, what some see as a central shrine, archive, and treasury, in the west wing. The building differs from the other palaces in having a large, round, stone-lined cistern or pool on the east side which may have been surrounded by a circle of columns; two wells or spring chambers on the southeast in which were found many offerings, such as cups containing olives and volcanic pumice, as well as a pyramidal double-axe base. In addition, a greater proportion of its square footage was given over to workshops (to the south of the central court, and a specially built annexe on the west) than in the other palaces. Also, a very small proportion of the westernmost section of the building, on the northwest, was given over to storage magazines; extensive modifications to this section of the building have transformed what may have been a fairly canonical western magazine area.

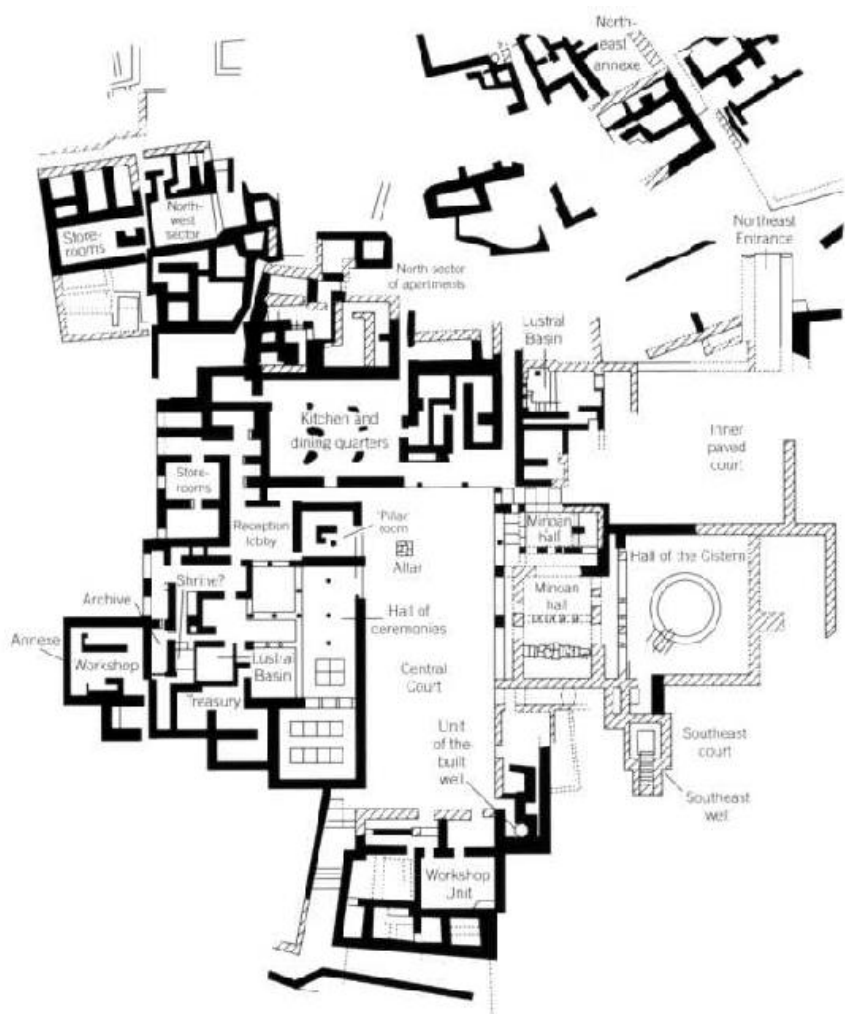
64

Aerial view of the Palace of Kato Zakro in east Crete, Second Palace Period. The palace and town of Kato Zakro was an important centre for sea-trading.



Plan of Kato Zakro Palace, east Crete, Second Palace Period. Note the traditional palatial features such as the rectangular central court aligned north-south, a pillared hall to the north of the court, and the double hall systems to the east and west of the central court. Unique to Kato Zakro area large, round, stone-lined cistern or pool on the east

side, and two wells or spring chambers on the southeast. Compared with the other palaces, a greater proportion of the Kato Zakro compound is given over to workshop space.



As discussed in Chapter 3, there is little or no trace remaining of a monumental west facade, or of an associated west court; the northern part of the compound is contiguous with other town construction; and the main palace entryway is not on the west, as elsewhere, but on the northeast, in the direction of what was most likely the town port or landing-stage. Kato Zakro was as much a distinct zone or quarter of its city as it was a distinct building compound, and much of the activity carried out there would have been given over to trade and manufacture, and to the processing and trans-shipment of goods. It had a ceremonial centre in the form of a lustral basin near the centre

of the west wing, and a stone pavement with a central hole near the northwest corner of the central court opposite a pillar crypt may have had some ceremonial purpose. A room containing Linear A (75) tablets was located in the west wing near the hall system. The palace compound looks very much like the headquarters of the town's evidently quite prosperous importexport business.

66

Stone (chlorite) bull's-head rhyton, found smashed in the ruins of the west wing hall of the Palace of Kato Zakro. Second Palace Period.

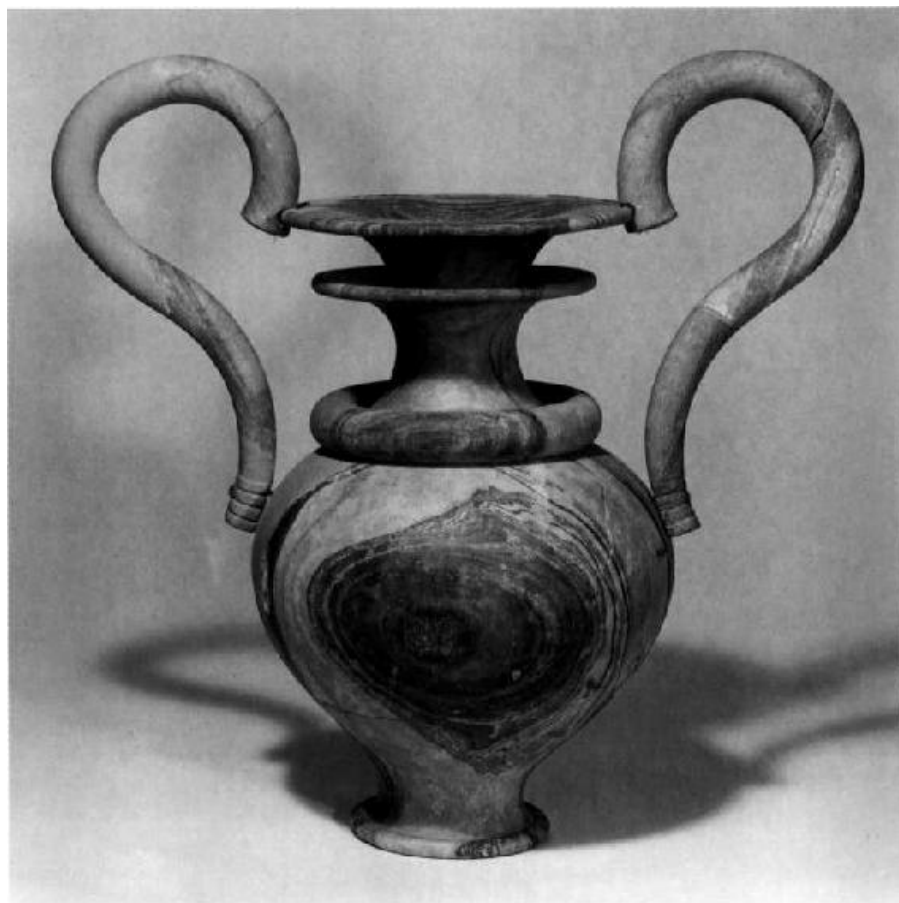


Two unusual finds from the western hall system of Kato Zakro are shown here. The first, an extraordinary bull's-head rhyton [661, partially restored, and the second, a veined marble two-handled jar [671, illustrate the degree to which Kato Zakro was engaged in the production and distribution of luxury goods. Stone cores, hollowed

out of vessels such as the latter, were found in the palace workshops. The rhyton, a drinking vessel occasionally depicted on written tablets, was probably meant to be smashed after a ritual libation; none found to date are complete or undamaged.

67

Veined marble doublehandled jar from the Palace of Kato Zakro. Fragments of many such vessels in difficult-to-work materials have been found in the palaces, suggesting that the production and distribution of these luxury items was centred therein. At Kato Zakro, the drilled stone cores of such vases have also been found in the workshop areas.



Minoan villas: function and design

It is a truism that the layout of no two Minoan buildings is exactly alike—a situation that appears to contrast more vividly with what may be seen elsewhere during the Bronze Age both in Egypt and the Near East. The unifying principles underlying the design of Minoan structures concern the relationships between the spatial and functional parts of a building, and the ways in which a building's features (many of which are themselves duplicated in many buildings) are packaged together as three-dimensional artefacts. Building layouts vary by the type of features included, and by their location, size, distribution, number, and relationship to the placement of doorways and corridors.

A great deal of visual and architectonic variation was accomplished by the manipulation and the placement of doorways, corridors, suites of rooms, stairwells, courtyards, and terraces. Nevertheless, a comparative examination of many Minoan structures has revealed that, within a particular time period and geographical region, there are certain constancies in formal and functional organization. We have no idea why it may have been the case that Minoan buildings of all types in the Second Palace Period were variations on a theme rather than being identical in plan. While it is clear that the possibilities of such variations in design may be related to certain levels of wealth and power in Minoan society, there might well have been other markers of status and power, such as the use of identical plans but at very different sizes and scale, as was more commonly the case elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean.

Entering one Minoan building does not necessarily equip the visitor with enough information to successfully navigate his or her way through others. What we tend to overlook or take for granted is that ground-plans reveal a building in quite a different way from the experience of moving through it room by room. Plans provide a synoptic or aerial view of a building's wall boundaries and bounded spaces. Looking at a plan is like having an entire story placed in front of your eyes at the same time, rather than having to turn the page to find out what will happen next—a rather more suitable metaphor, given that architectural experience is not merely spatial but, more fundamentally, a space-time performance.

Tylissos House C

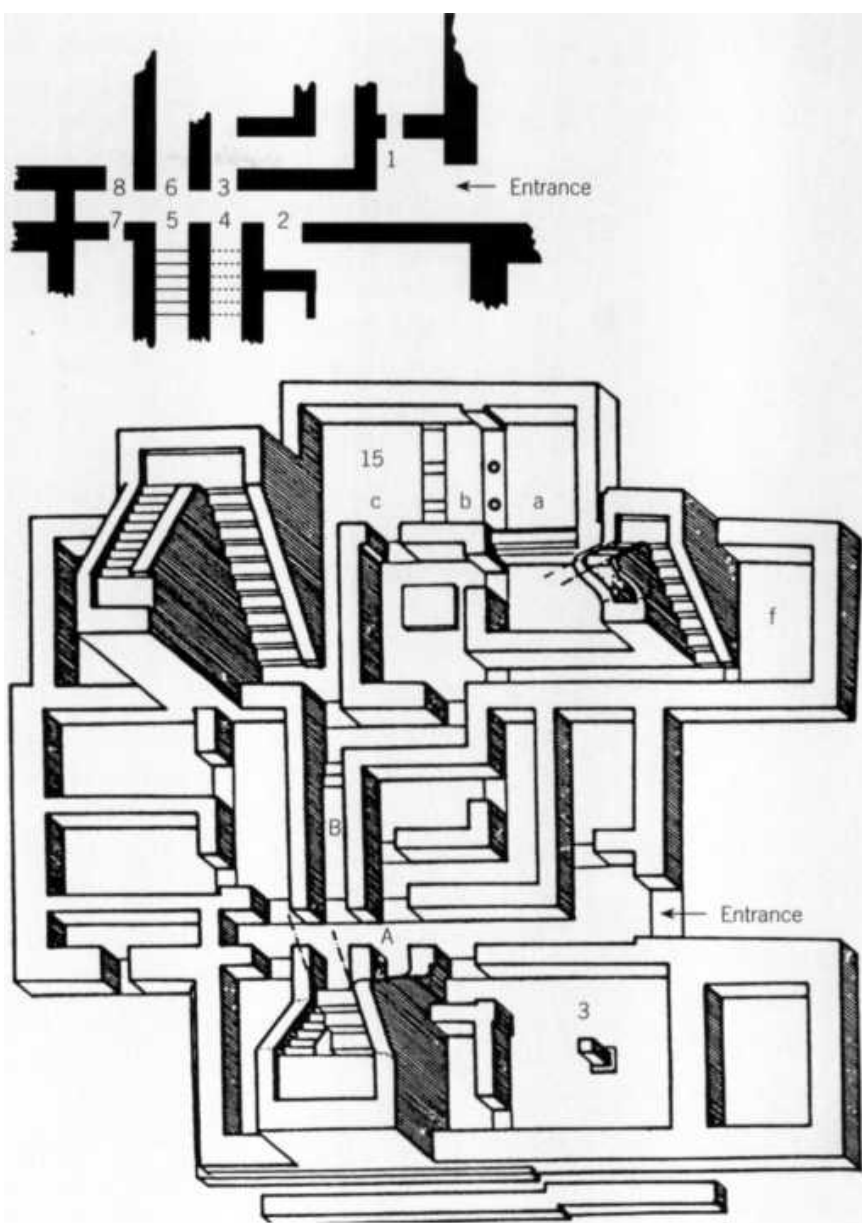
A Neopalatial villa in central Crete known as Tylissos House C provides a good illustration of the degree of subtlety and complexity

found in the planning and design of Minoan buildings. Much has been made of the fact that such buildings often lack external fortification walls." We would suggest that Minoan buildings were designed in such a way that they often constituted their own internal defence systems. A partial plan of just the entry corridor to Tyllissos House C will help to illustrate the complexity of experiencing a Minoan building [681].

It is not really clear from looking down this corridor which one of its seven otherwise identical doorways leads to what has been taken as the most private domestic quarter of the villa, the hall system at the top of the plan (rooms a, b, and c). Only the synoptic view provided by the isometric reconstruction provides readers with enough information to know that they should turn down corridor B. If you were an unwelcome visitor in a Minoan building, the inhabitants could have easily cut you off from certain parts of the building by merely closing a door.

Corridors play an especially significant role in creating a sense of privacy in that people no longer have to walk through rooms to get from one part of the building to another. The increased use of corridors in the Neopalatial Period suggests an additional level of sophistication in house design. With corridors, the opportunities for interaction with other inhabitants are sharply reduced, and privacy would have been notably increased. The incorporation of corridors and the accompanying sense of greater privacy in Minoan villas is one of the more striking changes in house design from the First Palace Period, with its typical square-within-a-square ground-plan discussed in Chapter 3.

Tyllissos House C, isometric plan and detail of entry corridor, Middle Minoan I1113/Late Minoan IA-IB. The subtlety and complexity of Minoan spatial organization is well illustrated by this finely conceived and carefully constructed villa, with its nesting of functional zones, its ingenious control of traffic and access, and its harmoniously balanced facades.



House C exhibits many of the features that are most characteristic of Neopalatial design. Two or possibly three storeys in height, House C has at least two rooms only accessible from a second storey, and one accessible only from outside and not connected to other internal spaces. The building contains a Minoan hall of three rooms (isa, b, and c, the first being a small light-well or court); an interior suite of rooms adjacent to the hall, one of which had a raised pavement, possibly for a portable hearth, and the other of which had a window opening on to court a; a latrine (f); a squarish pillar room which may have been a

combination workshop-shrine and storeroom (3); a suite of storage magazines on the west side of the building; a room-within-a-room at the centre of the house, and three different stairwells-all within an area some 22 m on a side. The main entrance is on the east, to space i, to the right of which may be a porter's room.

House C is made up of finely cut ashlar stone blocks, with recesses and projections on all sides of the building, each of the four facades thus presenting a different profile, of subtly graded sizes. The building reveals very great care and precision in design and execution, the final plan having been carved out of a square grid, each room and wall corresponding to simple fractions or multiples of the planning grid." The building was conceived and realized as a series of functional zones mapped on to suites of rooms with separate points of access, all around a common core: a small room within an L-shaped corridor, occupying the geometric centre of the plan. The central room's function or significance is unknown.

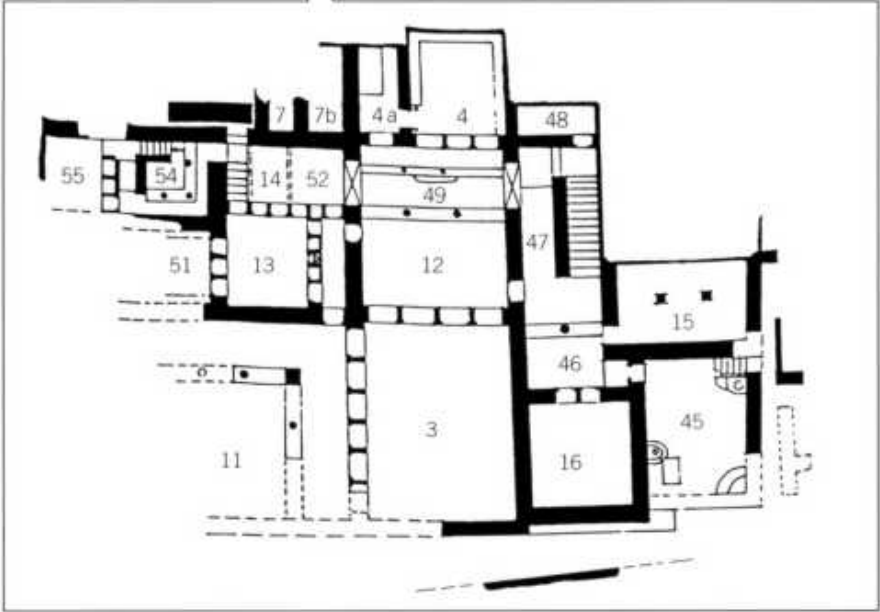
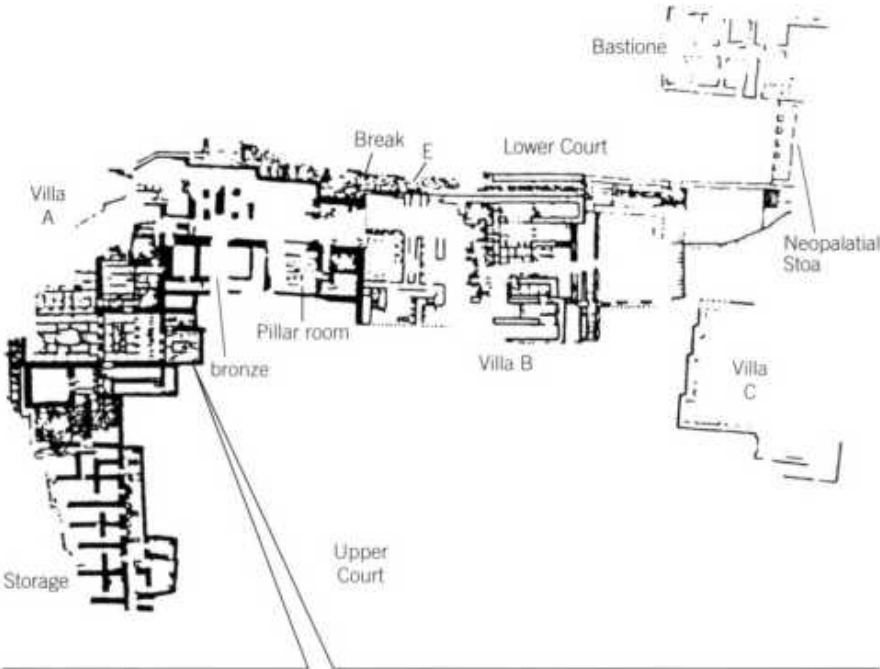
Surrounding this central suite is a longer L-shaped corridor, with many doorways to channel and direct traffic in multiple ways, to create private spaces, or to open certain areas to activities of various kinds. As is common in Minoan buildings of the period, there are multiple possibilities of movement and connection. Tylissos C is a compact example of Minoan design principles seen in buildings large and small during this period.

The villa annexe complex at Haghia Triadha

The villa annexe complex at Haghia Triadha [691 is significant for its fresco paintings, stone and bronze artefacts, palatial design features, and its important Linear A archive. A nearby stoa provides another example of architectural innovation and regional style. It belongs to the later (Mycenaean) Period and will be discussed in Chapter 5. We will begin with a discussion of the villa, its frescoes and some of the art works found in its ruins.

Haghia Triadha was excavated very early, at the beginning of the twentieth century, but was only recently fully published." The remains of the structure form a large L-shape around the lower northern and western flanks of a promontory, on top of which was a large rectangular courtyard running roughly east-west. There was a row of magazines on the west, a double pier-and-door partition hall system (often in the modern archaeological literature referred to as a polythyron (multiple doorway)), and a peristyle court on the north. There was also a pillar room and additional storage on the northwest,

a court, and ashlar facade walls. The recessed west facade of the storage magazines clearly reflects the design canon of the larger palaces.



Haghia Triadha, plan of Villa A and Annexe B with details of pier-and-door partition halls of Villa A. Second Palace Period. The numbering of the rooms here follows that of the original excavators.

Stretching some 85 m from east to west, Haghia Triadha is larger than the Little Palace at Knossos, or a building that has been seen as a roughly comparable large residential structure, Mallia House E. The plan (and much of the Haghia Triadha building) is difficult to comprehend at first glance due to a large axial structure (or megaron; see Chapters 2 and 5) from the Mycenaean (LM III) period built over the ruins of the earlier villa.

Originally interpreted as the summer residence of the 'king' of Phaistos," itself a mere 3 km walk to the southeast on the modern road, there has been some dispute in the recent literature as to whether Haghia Triadha was in fact a villa or a palace." Minimally, it has been referred to as 'half a palace' and some have argued that Haghia Triadha was palatial in design, if only in the sense that it replicates features found in the large palaces."

More recent studies have suggested that it may actually have been a compound made up of two distinct villas, now referred to as A and B, based on the formal duplication of pier-and-door partition hall systems, and distinct storage areas in both the north and the west wing." This hypothesis is further based upon the discovery of a material break between the two buildings, in which the rubble wall north of room 62 can be seen to join, but does not actually bond." It has been suggested that Villa B may have functioned as an annexe to Villa A, for there are interesting contemporary parallels at Knossos and Tylissos.'¢

There are two main entrances to Villa B at its northwest end. The easternmost of these provides access to the ground floor, and the westernmost entrance would have led to the upper storey, where we would propose that a bridge existed over Villa B to connect it with Villa A on the west—a situation which may parallel those seen elsewhere. Two other possible entryways to Villa B on the east were blocked off at a later time in the building's history. Other changes blocked the original eastern entrance to Villa A. These later constructions not only suggest the need to create additional storage space, but they also restricted access to Villas A and B.

The size and rectangular shape of Villa B makes it comparable in outward form to other annexes including the Unexplored Mansion at Knossos and House B at Tylissos." Further similarities include its close

association with a large villa building with palatial features, including an indented facade outline, Minoan pier-and-door partition hall system, and pillar room such as found in the Knossian Little Palace and Tylissos House A. Like the Knossian complex, the Haghia Triadha complex is closely associated with a palace.

Haghia Triadha has been recently interpreted as the centre of an estate that functioned within the larger administrative system of the palaces. This interpretation is based on Near Eastern analogies, and considering the presence of a Linear A archive and stores of clay sealings, as well as taking into account the nature of the other artefacts found in the structure-including stone vessels, a cache of copper ingots, and bronze figurines." Haghia Triadha A contains an elaborate and complex Minoan hall system, which includes rooms 3, 12, 49, 4, and 4a, 11, 13, 14, Si, and 52. These have been interpreted by excavators as an audience hall (3, 12, 49, 4), a bedroom (4a), and a smaller hall system (13, 14, 52, Si) with associated fresco decoration found specifically in room 14. Rooms 11, 3, 12, and 49 can be seen as two sets of Minoan hall systems superposed at right angles." A parallel for this arrangement may be seen at nearby Phaistos in the northwest wing, while the relationship between rooms 4 and 4a resembles the relationship between the so-called Queen's megaron and the supposed bathroom at Knossos. It should be noted, however, that there is no evidence for steps to indicate that the bathroom at Knossos ever functioned as a lustral basin, and the bathtub visible today in this room was in fact found in the Queen's megaron, and dates to the LM II or Third Palace Period.

Room 4a is a cubicle connected to an inner benched room of the pier-and-door partition hall. It has been interpreted as a bedroom because of a slightly raised stone dais. A female votive bronze figurine found a few centimetres above the floor," and a cache of bronze tools found in this room, possibly fell from a room or rooms above. The benched hall (room 4) which is connected to room 4a can accommodate up to 17 people, and a pier-and-door partition enables rooms 4 and 4a to be closed off from the larger Minoan hall system of rooms 3, 12, and 49. Would this seating arrangement for such a large number of people be compatible with sleeping in room 4a? Further, why would such a small part of the house be devoted to a sleeping area? Or is sleeping an activity that could have been carried on in any large room as one sees in many traditional villages in the Middle East today? These questions are worth bearing in mind, when one considers the function of this architectural feature, as our interpretations of these formal features are often difficult to disentangle from modern assumptions about appropriate architectural

function.

A second set of PDP halls, consisting of rooms 13, 14, 52, and Si, is connected to the larger hall described above by a narrow corridor which links rooms 11, 12, 13, and 52. Hall 14 contained three fresco panels. Three compartments along the south wall of room 13 were blocked off to through traffic. A hole in the central compartment is connected to a reservoir below. The centrality of the room within the building and the absence of a drain suggest that this hole may have served as a receptacle for libations or liquid offerings.

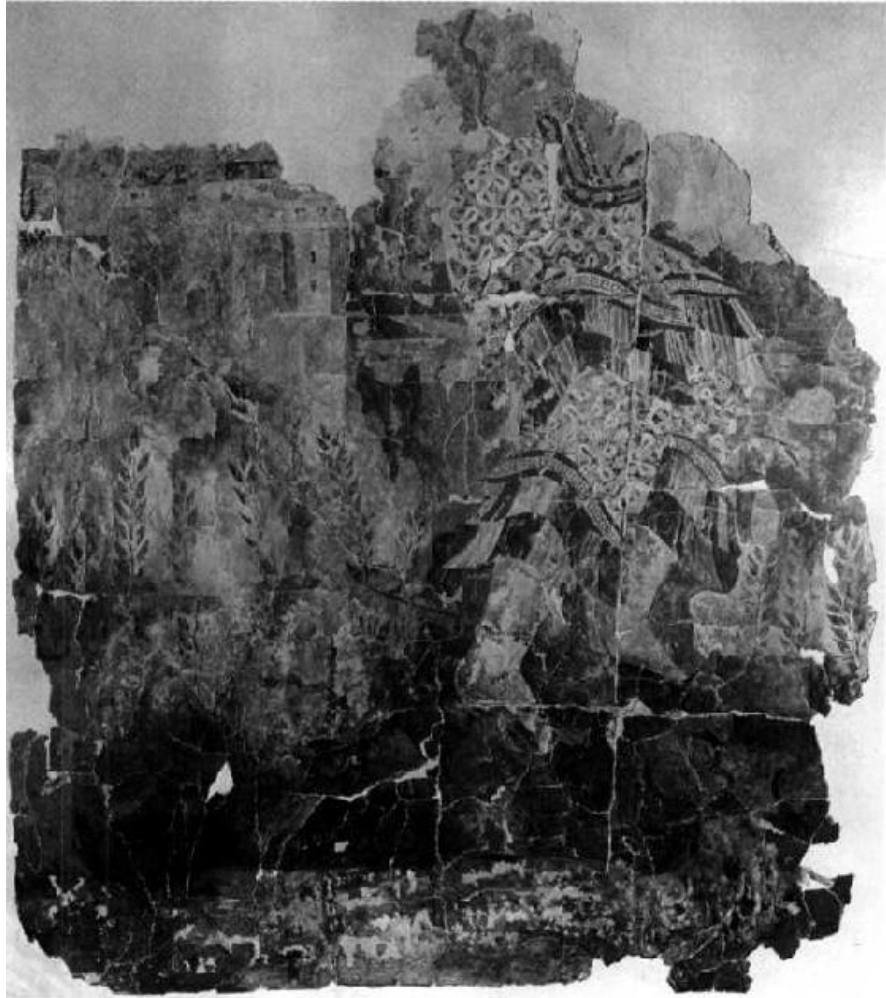
70

Fresco of cat and pheasant, Haghia Triadha Villa complex. This fresco, found with three other fresco panels in Room 14, depicts a cat stalking a pheasant with leaping agrimia (wild goats) and other cats.



71

Fresco depicting a woman, possibly a goddess or worshipper, crouching at an altar; from room 14, Haghia Triadha Villa A.



The fresco panels in room 14 included a cat stalking a pheasant [701 with leaping agrimia (goats) and other cats; a female crouching near an architectural structure [711; and a kneeling female figure picking crocuses.²³ It has been tempting to see played out here iconographic or thematic oppositions between hunting and gathering; male and female; or even nature versus culture (agrios versus domus) programmatically staged within the same room, with different walls carrying distinct parts of a fresco cycle. The association between women and crocuses is discussed below on p. 125 in relationship to the fresco cycles of house Xeste 3 at Akrotiri on Thera.

Room 14 was the most secluded room in this group unit, and was divided from room 52 by a narrow partition wall with access provided only through room 13. These rooms contained remains of elaborate stone vessels that had fallen from above during the destruction of the

building, including the famous Harvester vase, the Boxer rhyton, an alabaster boat and obsidian conch (from room 13), alabastra (squat jars with curved profiles), a marble chalice, and a pedestalled lamp (from room 4). It has been suggested that room 14 at Haghia Triadha was a bedroom, based on its secluded location and its relationships to other rooms, while room 52, which had a basin, was possibly a bathroom."

A rhyton (plural, rhyta) is a vessel that is believed by most scholars to have been used in ceremonies or rituals for pouring liquid offerings. They usually had a larger opening at the top and a small one at the bottom. The best-known shape is the conical rhyton, of which the Boxer vase is one. They also take the form of animals and animal heads, most notably in the shape of a bull's head. The Harvester vase is shaped rather like an ostrich egg. Rhyta are made out of various materials including stone, clay, and metal. Both the rhyta illustrated are carved from the stone serpentine and both were found in scattered fragments.

The Boxer rhyton [72] recalls scenes of young boxers found in the frescoes of Akrotiri, there taken as alluding to initiation practices among young males, perhaps complementing female initiation practices, also depicted in Akrotiri frescoes (see below). The preserved remains of the Boxer rhyton include four registers that depict several scenes of boxing or wrestling, while a fourth register depicts a man being savagely gored by a bull. As in many other representations, the athletes are depicted as youthful and vigorous with slim waists and long flowing hair. They are wearing the Minoan breech-cloth with a codpiece arrangement.²⁵ All are carved in low relief. With regard to this last image, a suggestion has been put forward that the bull may symbolize Knossian power," because bulls are prominent at Knossos. Others have suggested that bull sports, sacrifice, or other uses of the bull (such as skins for shields) indicate an appropriation of or sharing of the bull's power.²⁷



72

The so-called 'Boxer' rhyton, Haghia Triad ha Villa A, steatite or black serpentine. The surface of the conical vessel is divided into four registers, each carved in low relief. Three of the preserved registers depict several scenes of boxing or wrestling, while one register depicts a man being gored by a bull.



The so-called Harvester vase [731 depicts a group of 27 males including four bare-headed singers, with the rest wearing breech-cloths and carrying hoes. They are led by a figure described as a 'long-haired priest in a scaly ritual cloak'." Various interpretations have suggested a processional dance, a triumph of warriors, a sowing festival, a harvest festival; a seed-time festival performed by a procession of revellers, or a religious procession of sowing and ploughing which bears a 'remarkable resemblance to the English Plough Monday Processions 1.21 Looking at this vase from a different perspective calls to mind a somewhat different image, namely a propagandistic depiction of either corvee (forced labour) which is well

attested in contemporary Near Eastern economies, especially at Mari," or as in the mainland Mycenaean economy where land was provided in exchange for obligat- ory service."

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The Harvester vase, Hagia Triadha Villa A. This ostrich-egg-shaped vase is made of black steatite. Twenty-seven males are shown being led by a figure, perhaps a priest. The scene has been interpreted as a processional dance, a triumphal march of warriors, and a harvest festival.

Stone rhyta are rarely found intact, which has suggested their ritual breakage, particularly of animal-headed rhyta.¹² The notion of ritual breakage is taken up again later in this chapter (see p. 138). Conical rhyta could be used to transfer liquids by lowering them into a pithos full of oil, and then placing one's hand over the top to prevent spillage from the bottom.;

Like the Harvester and Boxer rhyta, many Minoan stone vases are made from serpentine, which could be acquired locally. One of the more notable imported stones used in the production of vessels was obsidian from the Aegean island of Ghyali. The character of the stone is such that it does not fracture regularly, and it was not favoured by the Minoans for tool making. However, its translucence and surface apparently appealed to Minoan taste. By tracking the distribution of Ghyali obsidian as raw material and debitage (waste) rather than as finished product, one archaeologist has been able to chart its trade route throughout the Aegean.¹ By the time it reached Crete, this route ran along the north coast stopping at Knossos, Mallia, Palaikastro, Mochlos, Pseira, and probably at Kato Zakro. The fact that finished vessels were found in southern Crete as far apart as

Haghia Triadha and Pyrgos is further evidence of an intra-island trading network, as suggested above in Chapter 3.;

The elaborate gypsum paving, fresco decoration, and manipulation of circulation in the pier-and-door partition halls at Haghia Triadha, and their close relationship to scribal and administrative activity (particularly in room SS) suggest functions more complex than that of simple habitation. The interpretative literature now seems to indicate that at a number of sites, archive rooms can be found in a close relationship to the Minoan hall. There is a similar placement of archive rooms in close proximity to the Minoan hall at both Mallia and Kato Zakro.³⁶ Another, later, archive room of scalings was located above the treasury at Knossos in association with a Minoan hall.³⁷ The Minoan hall system, which has traditionally been interpreted as a largely residential or ceremonial area, might also (or instead) be understood as an office.

It seems obvious that scribes or administrators must have taken an active political role in running Minoan society. This introduces notions of agency and action into this set of spaces. (As we shall see in Chapter 5, the situation at Mycenaean Pylos is somewhat different in that the archive room is more closely associated with the exterior of the building than with the interior megaron hall proper.)

Room i6 at Haghia Triadha is a second, often-overlooked pier-and-door partition hall connected on the south to the more elaborate set of halls discussed above. Instead of being used for residence or the performance of ritual, it was used for storage activities, to facilitate access, and may also have been associated with food preparation through its relationship with room 4S to the south. It includes a hall, pier-and-door partitions, a forehall with a column, and a paved section corresponding to a light-well, which led to a staircase to the upper storey. It contained pithoi, bronze double axe heads, and a hoe.

The storage area in the east part of Villa A included two long, narrow cubicles (7 and 7a) that were joined at a right angle to form an L-shaped room. Room 7 contained 19 copper oxhide ingots while room 7a contained two bronze agrimia (wild goats), a female figure [741, and six male bronze figurines, as well as two pyramidal stone double-axe bases. These last were small stone bases with a hole in the top for holding a double axe affixed to a pole. This combination is represented on the famous sarcophagus from Haghia Triadha (see p. X78). It may have been connected to room 17, a small square room with a pillar. Although room 17 was found to be empty, the

excavators have interpreted it as a storage magazine."



74

Bronze figurine, Haghia Triadha Villa A. This figurine was found in room 7a with two bronze agrimia, six male bronze figurines and two pyramidal stone doubleaxe bases.

This assemblage of art works, artefacts, and architectural features exemplifies a larger overall pattern in Minoan buildings. This pattern takes the form of a recurring association of storage activities, pillars, the double axe, and in this case, bronze storage. We will take up the possible significance of these relationships below (p. 132).

In sum, a wide range of activities existed at Haghia Triadha: work, administration, entertainment, the consumption of food, trade relations, habitation (possibly sleeping: rooms 4, 4a, r4), and cult activities (room W. In addition, the architectural design was symbolically charged with a recurring association of the pillar crypt, the storage of bronze, and the double axe; frescoes depicting women, lilies and crocuses, balanced by a hunting scene. This iconography seems to have been important to the Minoans, and was placed in association with a room with a tank for the deposition of liquid. Subtle manipulations of space, air, and light are to be found in certain places: rooms 3, 4, 13, and 14 could be completely closed off, while

rooms 12 and ii could not be fully sealed.

The terminology and typology of Minoan palatial buildings

Many of the recent archaeological discoveries on Crete (such as the court-centred buildings at Petras and Makrygialos in the east and Zominthos in the central part of the island) have called into question older distinctions between villa and palace as well as certain past assumptions about their construction. For example, we tend to associate finely worked ashlar masonry, often in limestone or gypsum, with the Minoan palaces and palatial villas. We need to recall that moving stone was one of the most laborious tasks undertaken in ancient building, so that Minoan builders tended to rely primarily on local stone." There was great variety in the materials and techniques used in Minoan buildings. For example, sandstone predominates at Mallia, and gypsum, so prevalent at Knossos and Phaistos, is absent at both Tyliссos and Kato Zakro.⁴⁰ Finely worked ashlar masonry is absent in the indented west facades at Kato Zakro and Makrygialos which instead use roughly worked megalithic blocks, and at Zominthos, where a dry wall technique was employed." At 1,600 square metres in size, Zominthos is surely palatial, yet not in the use of materials or construction techniques. The indented west facade found at these sites is a palatial design feature, but the technique in executing it varied considerably.

One scholar has distinguished as many as five types of masonry found in Minoan vernacular architecture.⁴² But with its palatial size and vernacular technique, Zominthos confounds any proposed polite versus vernacular opposition we might be tempted to see, 'polite' having been defined as architecture designed and built by professionals following national or international styles, often using exotic materials and innovative or adventurous techniques to achieve 'aesthetically pleasing' effects." This definition maybe useful for understanding certain types of buildings; yet an aesthetically sophisticated design was not always executed with exotic materials or with expert technique.

Not all Minoan buildings, and certainly not all parts of the same building, received the same degree of attention. Although it is likely that architects may have been itinerant, labour, with varying degrees of skill and experience, is more likely to have often been locally based. The finely articulated west facade of the Second Palace at Phaistos stands in sharp contrast to the trapezoidal layout of the otherwise elegant gypsum-veneered Minoan hall." Anyone who has ever tried to

build a house in recent times surely knows that builders and building contractors seldom exactly realize the same building as that (presumably) intended in an architect's plan.

The so-called Cult Villa at Makrygialos presents some of the same difficulties found at Zominthos with regard to design classification. Makrygialos is located on the east edge of the south shore of eastern Crete, on the Bay of Kala Nera. It was excavated in the 1970s and is dated to the Neopalatial Period." Makrygialos incorporated an even greater number of palatial design features than Zominthos. These include a central court with a north-south orientation, a colonnade, an altar, possibly a west court, an indented west wall facade, storage magazines in the structure's west wing, and possibly a pillar room or crypt. The central court is distinctive, and, in plan and in its orchestration of design features, the plan of Makrygialos calls to mind a major Minoan palace. However, features commonly associated with the palaces and palatial villas such as Minoan pier-and-door partition hall systems and ashlar masonry are conspicuously absent.

Discoveries such as these have increasingly rendered problematic the various classificatory schemes that Minoan archaeologists and art historians have long depended upon. It maybe useful to suggest a more flexible approach that can be modified to accommodate new discoveries while taking into account differences that result from both regional variation and needs that are particular and local, rather than universal and general. We might look at the different architectural features that make up the formal organization of a building as components in a system of features, some of which are invariant over time and space, others of which may be subject to variation or change. Such components or features would be based on morphological characteristics such as the pillared hall, central court, incised double-axe mason's marks, or benched rooms, each of which is capable of taking on multiple functions, meanings, or connotations in spite of roughly similar locational contexts. Such a list can be continuously augmented as new forms and features are discovered, enabling the articulation and documentation of local, regional, or trans-regional styles and typologies.

It should be clear at this point in our introduction to Aegean art and architecture that the picture that we have of Minoan architecture is rapidly changing. Evident increasingly are regional variations in design and style, which appear to have existed within broader similarities that may have transcended local differences. The oppositions between villa/palace, vernacular/polite, planned/agglutinative are in no way as clear-cut as once imagined. The lavish

Minoan villa fully equipped with ashlar facades, canonical Minoan hall, lustral basin, and pillar crypt is a stereotype that is more likely to be found at Knossos or in our imagination than anywhere else—attesting to the power that Arthur Evans' Knossos has exercised over generations of visitors and scholars.

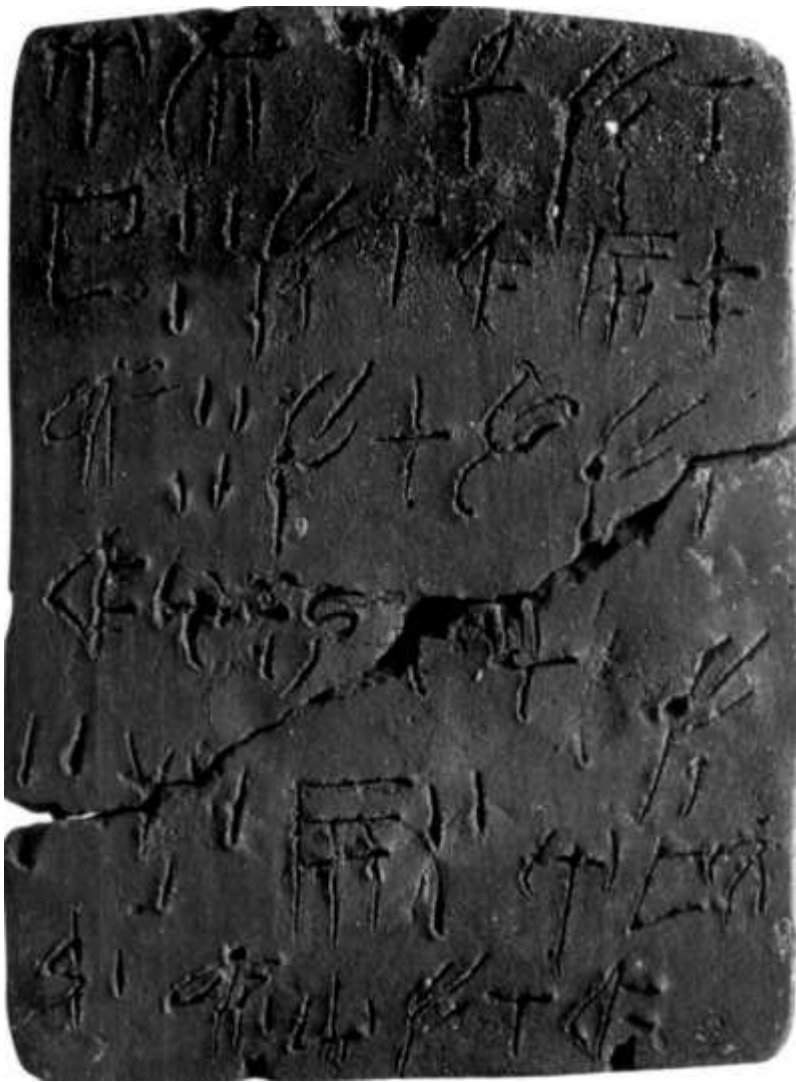
The Minoan and Mycenaean spheres of influence

Akrotiri on Thera: Pompeii of the ancient Aegean

One of the most spectacular archaeological discoveries of the second half of the twentieth century was made in 1967 by Greek archaeologist Spyridon Marinatos on the site of Akrotiri, in the southwestern corner of the volcanic island of Thera (Santorini), some 100 km north of Crete. Destroyed by the catastrophic eruption of the island in the middle of the second millennium BCE, the Second Palace Period town at Akrotiri was buried under many metres of volcanic pumice, which effectively preserved many features of the settlement, much in the manner of Pompeii's burial by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE.

75

A tablet with Linear A inscription, from the west wing of the Palace of Kato Zakro; a similarly placed archive was found near the Minoan hall at Hagia Triada.

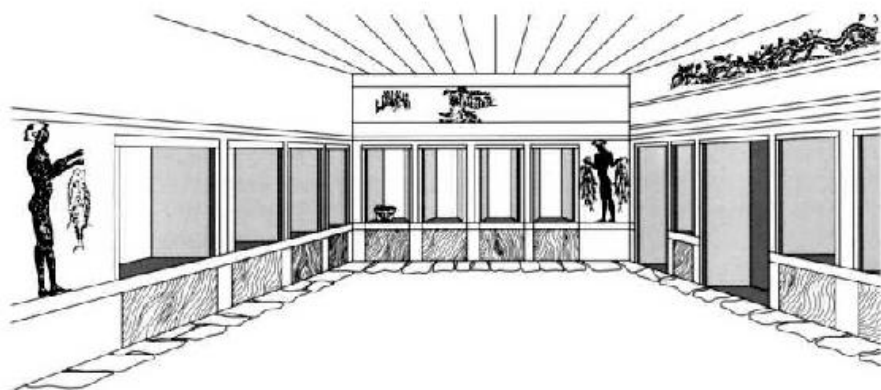


Enough erosion of the protecting pumice had taken place by the 1960s in this corner of the island to reveal traces of the old city. Houses (with many Cretan features) along with many of their contents were preserved up to and in some cases above their second storeys [761]. Akrotiri has produced some of the most complete paintings and buildings known from the Aegean Bronze Age. Nonetheless, to date only a fraction of the original city has been uncovered, and it will be many years before a complete picture of this remarkable site is revealed. Akrotiri appears to have been a harbour town, the port facilities most likely having been to the west of the site.

The West House at Akrotiri on the island of Thera (modern Santorini), Second Palace Period, Late Minoan IA. Note the large window, referred to by some as a 'window of appearances', fronting on a small public square in the town.



The 'Flotilla' fresco from room 5 in the West House at Akrotiri, Second Palace Period, Late Minoan IA. This fresco depicts several ships sailing between island towns. Note how the buildings (some crowned with double horns) are massed together to suggest a dense townscape set in a rugged terrain, in a manner familiar on Crete. There have been numerous interpretations of the subject matter of this reconstructed fresco, none fully compelling.



78

Reconstruction of room 5 of the West House, Akrotiri, Thera. Note the position of the frescoes, showing naked fisherboys converging with their offerings, possibly upon a small altar in the corner.

The structures excavated thus far appear to be a mixture or perhaps even a combination of shrines, houses, and buildings given over to

manufacture and storage. The shrines consisted for the most part of ceremonial rooms and service quarters, in some cases on different storeys, with most walls in the former areas completely covered with life-size figures singly or in groups, lively landscape and marine frescoes, scenes of gender initiation rites, and views of island cities from the sea. The style and thematic contents of these extraordinary paintings are identical to what has been previously known in Crete itself only in much-restored fresco fragments from Knossos, or on sealstones and jewellery. Thera has provided us with the first extensive contextualized picture of Minoan (or Minoanizing) wall painting and its relationships to social ceremony and ritual.

Illustration 77 shows a detail of one of the marine frescoes from room 5 on the second storey of the West House Shrine. This Flotilla fresco probably covered much of the upper portion of at least two walls in the room, alternating with a landscape frieze with a stream and animals. The northwest corner of the room, framed by two rows of multiple windows, appears to have been the focus of some ceremony or celebration, suggested by the depiction of two naked fisherboys carrying loads of fish in the direction of a clay offering table or tripod placed on the window sill of the westernmost window 1781. The boys are shown with shaved heads, except for two areas where snake-like locks were left; similar depictions of pre-adolescent girls are also known from Akrotiri. A similar convention for indicating children was used in Egypt. The sections below the windows were painted to imitate veined marble.

The Flotilla fresco (which was on the south wall, not shown in the reconstructed view of the room) depicted a series of about a dozen long ships sailing between islands, on each of which is a harbour city, each made up of massed stone buildings, stairways, and horned altars (see 77). The overall fresco seems to depict an important inter-island ceremony. Island residents are shown here in our detailed view watching the procession from windows, on rooftops, and in front of buildings. The sleek ships are either under full sail or being rowed by many oarsmen, and all contain passengers, some standing, others seated under canopies. Each ship has a helmsman and a cabin in the stern for the person in charge of the vessel; these boxes or palanquins are also depicted separately and at a large scale in a fresco in room 4 in the West House. The fresco also shows many landscape details behind and to the side of the island towns, including rushing streams, lush vegetation, and running animals such as lions and deer (lions are also painted on the sides of some ships). The rocky nature of the islands is clearly highlighted, and a sense of contrasting costumes (rough country cloaks versus town clothing) can be seen in some parts

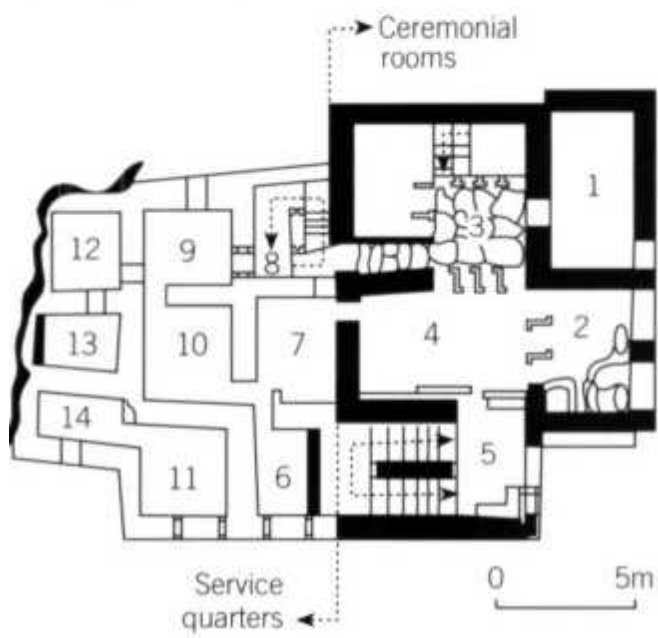
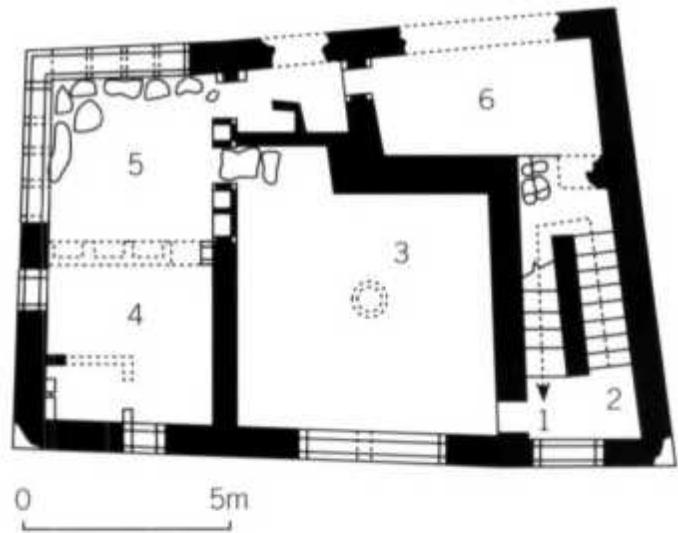
of the fresco. Adult women are depicted in a familiar Minoan fashion, with flounced multicoloured skirts, with breasts bare (see also 83 below).

The portion of the fresco shown in the reconstruction of room 5 [781 is only preserved in part, the central portion partially visible in our illustration showing a scene difficult to interpret, with a sea battle below, marching spear-bearing warriors leaving a town in the middle, and what may be a shrine with dancing women, trees, and a procession of cattle and herdsmen above.

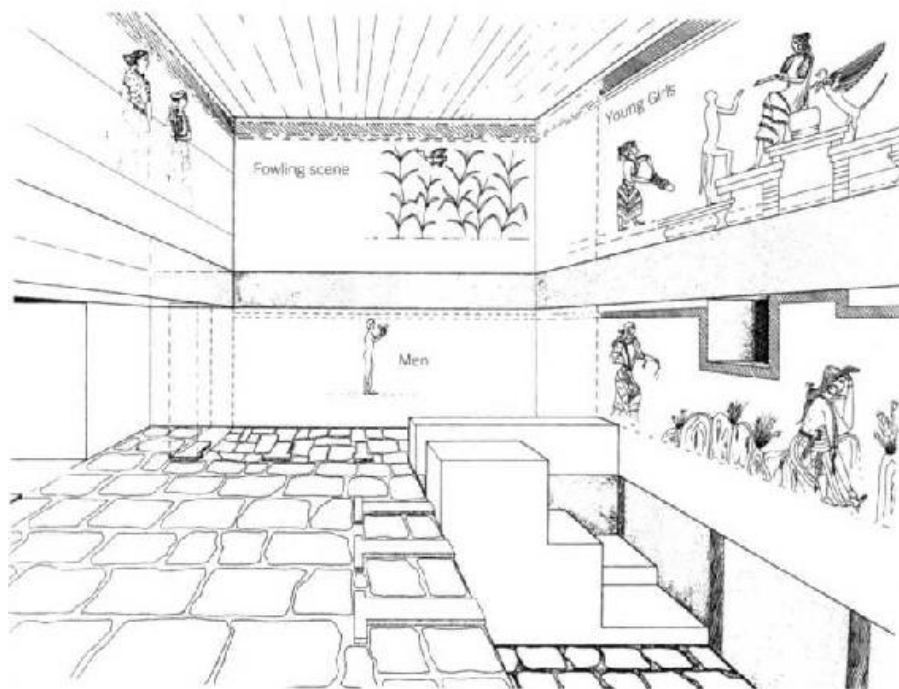
House Xeste 3 (see plan and reconstructed interior 179, 801) appears to have included a shrine devoted in large part to female puberty initiation ceremonies. The reconstruction of room 3 shows a complex space divided by pier-and-door partitions, creating several interior zones that could be shut off from each other, as well as a sunken chamber (lustral basin or *adyton*) in the northeast corner, accessed by an L-shaped stair. On the wall above the sunken chamber is a fresco depicting a young girl seated on a rock nursing a bleeding foot; behind her is an adult, bare-breasted woman carrying a necklace in her hand, evidently a gift to the adolescent. To the right of both of them, but not illustrated here, is a young girl wearing a translucent veil, averting her gaze from the bleeding girl; she may represent a prepubescent girl. To the far right of the scene is a horned altar, with blood dripping down its facade. The subject matter of the entire ceremony has been interpreted by some as the first menstruation of young girls, the celebration of which undoubtedly took place in this shrine.

The flowers depicted in the landscape are crocus (possibly used as a painkiller for menstrual cramps and as a dye-saffron-for the yellow cloth worn by females); to the left and around the corner was a frieze of naked boys bearing metal vessels, walking in the direction of the main *adyton* scene. On the floor above is a remarkable fresco of young girls picking crocus flowers and bringing baskets of them to a seated adult female figure, most likely a goddess. A detail of one flowergatherer is shown in 81; she is depicted picking flowers on a rocky escarpment, wearing a very richly coloured and textured skirt and bodice. She is wearing a good deal of jewellery-several bracelets, pendants from her upper arms and sleeves, as well as large hoop earrings. Her hair is very complexly coiffed in what is taken as a pre-adult manner, with most of the head shaved, a single rear lock looped in serpentine fashion, and frontal wisps over her forehead band. Her eye is clearly made up, as are her lips.

Plans of the West House and House Xeste 3, Akrotiri, Thera. The service and ceremonial quarters are spread out on two storeys at the West House, but are adjacent to each other on the same floor at Xeste 3. The latter arrangement is more common on Crete, but the former is not unknown.



Thera. The scenes taking place in the frescoes and the presence of an adyton or lustral basin may indicate that this room was a shrine that may have been used for female initiation ceremonies.





81

Young girl gathering crocus flowers; fresco from room 3, House Xeste 3, Akrotiri, Thera. Based on the shaved head and snake-like locks of hair, the girl is believed to be an adolescent.

She is to the rear of the central seated figure, walking in her direction; the girl on the left side of the painting is similarly attired and made up, and carries a basket of crocus flowers, no doubt as an offering to the central figure. It seems reasonable to conclude that the central seated adult female is not an ordinary woman. She is depicted between two more or less fantastic animals—a bluish monkey making

an offering to her, and a rampant (half-bird, half-lion) griffin at her back, perhaps in a protective heraldic gesture.

Monkeys (usually painted blue) are known in many Minoan depictions; for example those in the fresco [821 from the upper storey of House Beta shown cavorting in what appears to be Thera landscape seem to be vervets, native today to Nubia, indicating more than casual contact between the Aegean and the upper Nile Valley at this period either through direct contact or by way of Egypt as an intermediary."

Illustration 83 shows a portion of a life-size female figure from room i in the House of the Ladies in Akrotiri, so called because of this and an accompanying scene. Of unknown function, the House of the Ladies also contained a large fresco of papyrus plants in an adjacent alcove. Here an adult woman with a full head of hair wears a flounced Minoan skirt and an open bodice which reveals a large breast. She is carrying what appears to be another apron and may be offering it to a second, possibly seated woman. On the wall opposite this are traces of a similar scene, and it may refer to a robing ceremony which may on occasion have been carried out in this anteroom. Above all the figures on both walls is a wavy blue line separating the robing scene from a field of blue stars connected by red dotted lines.

The paintings at Akrotiri on Thera are quite extraordinary, both for their compositional and naturalistic qualities, and for the new glimpses they are giving us of aspects of Bronze Age Aegean life hitherto unknown or only known by inference. It is coming to be understood much more clearly how intensely and encyclopedically the Therans (and Minoans) seem to have recorded and celebrated their lives and social worlds through art and material culture. In this respect, it may well be that they bore no small resemblance to their contemporaries in Egypt and perhaps elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean (as we shall see later, Minoan-style painting left its trace in Egypt itself). Most of the Thera frescoes will continue to be subject to intense discussion and debate for many years, but most observers agree that they add a rich, vibrant dimension to what we are learning about the Aegean world of the second millennium BCE.

Ayia Irini on Kea: HouseA

Located just 25 km from the mainland Attic coast, Kea is the first in the group of Aegean islands known as the Cyclades (those that in later Greek times were perceived as circling round the central island of

Delos, sacred to Apollo). Although the surface of Kea is just 121 sq. km, it is very mountainous with several fertile valleys. The island was the site of an important Neolithic and Bronze Age town located on the peninsula of Ayia Irini (St Irene) near the modern village of Voukari. Ayia Irini is notable for the numerous Minoan architectural features and fresco motifs found at House A along with evidence for Minoan craft technology. These contrast with a local building technique, and design differences in the neighbouring houses, which show mainland Mycenaean influence in terms of their fresco motifs. Ayia Irini is also remarkable for a temple that continued in use into the (Hellenic) Iron Age.

Previous comparisons between Minoan buildings and House A have tended to emphasize the more obvious design features of Minoan buildings such as pier-and-door partition halls and lustral basins.¹ However, there are some 60 different recognizable design features found in Minoan buildings, in different combinations at different places and times." A number of Minoan houses lack either pier-and-door partitions or Minoan halls as described above. Some of these houses form part of the vernacular tradition discussed in Chapter 3 and include the well-attested house with the column,⁴⁹ while more well-known examples include the house at Sklavokambos, the Unexplored Mansion (which functioned as an annexe to the Little Palace at Knossos), and the villa at Makrygialos as discussed above.

Ayia Irini House A (84) included a significant number of distinctively Minoan features." Previous emphasis in the archaeological literature on the significance of the use of local materials and construction techniques in building House A has neglected to consider differences likely to have arisen between the architect and planner (who may have been from, or been trained on, Crete) and those who executed the plan using familiar local materials and ways of building. Even on Crete there are wide variations in the execution of particular building plans and in the materials used." The distribution of particular architectural features is quantitative while the differences in their execution by builders is often more qualitative in nature.

Many new discoveries have increased our knowledge of Minoan architecture since the publication of House A at Ayia Irini in 1984. These include new architectural discoveries on Crete at Kommos, Makrygialos, Mochlos, Monastiraki, Petras, and Zominthos;⁹² the re-study of old material;⁵⁴ and last, but not least, the excavation of many Minoan-style features at Akrotiri.⁵⁵ Some of the unique features of these buildings have been discussed above.

Such new discoveries make it easier to more clearly apprehend and evaluate the number of Minoan-style architectural features found in Ayia Irini House A.



82

The 'Blue Monkey' fresco from room 6, House Beta, Akrotiri, Thera. Blue monkeys, such as those depicted here, are often represented in Minoan frescoes both in Crete and Thera and may indicate contact with Africa.

Quantitative differences relating to the presence or absence of particular features as well as in their spatial arrangement suggest

qualitative differences in the ways buildings may actually have been used by the Minoans themselves. For example, there were four lustral basins at Phaistos, but only one in the palace at Mallia. Clearly, something different was occurring at both places. As the only house at Ayia Irini incorporating a substantial number of Minoan features, it would be unlikely that House A incorporate every feature found in the Minoan corpus on Crete.

83

Bare-breasted female figure from room 1 of the House of the Ladies, Akrotiri, Thera. This life-size woman appears to be carrying an apron and may be offering it to a second woman. Above her is a wavy blue line which separates all of the figures on both walls of this room from a field of blue stars connected by red dotted lines.



Let us look more closely at the Ayia Irini structure. We often associate light-wells in Minoan architecture with the occurrence of pier-and-door partition halls as discussed above. This association makes the appearance of a light-well unaccompanied by these features, as in room 23 at House A, seem unusual. Like House A, however, a number of Minoan buildings have light-wells that are not

associated with pier-and-door partition halls. Examples of this can be found adjoining the benched rooms in the so-called country villa at Pyrgos Myrtos, in room 12 of the villa at Nirou Khani, and most notably at the Palace of Knossos where there are at least three examples." These include the Court of the Distaffs; the Queen's megaron which is often confused with a Minoan hall, but is in fact a benched room with many windows; and the light-well of the east wing Grand Staircase.

The light-well in House A is associated with a frescoed hall above the pillar room (room 31) and together they form a secluded unit. The spatial depth of this hall, that is, its distance from the entrance, compares with that of certain houses at Knossos and Mallia and may emulate palatial arrangements, as has been quantitatively demonstrated recently. ¹ A more accessible second hall (rooms 37-38) opens off the courtyard (room 36). Another scholar has made a strong case for the regular distribution of two halls in Minoan houses."

In sum, House A incorporates some 19 architectural features that can be found in Minoan houses on Crete. In addition to the dual halls, and the hall and light-well combination as discussed above, these included: a labyrinthine circulation pattern, the non-axial layout of rooms, some attempt at cut or ashlar masonry in wall facades as well as an increased use of limestone," the presence of indented-trace wall facades, an irregular ground-plan not unlike that common in Minoan buildings, and cut-slab pavement, including red plaster in its interstices (a common feature at Knossos and Phaistos, but not attested elsewhere in the Cyclades)." Other features include a U-shaped stone drain ;61 slots for a wooden door frame, again, rendered in stone; and a pillar room fashioned in local technique and associated with storage practices.

The placement of pillar rooms or crypts near a storage area or their actual use as storage areas is a regular feature that occurs in many Minoan buildings. The size of the rooms is often so small that the pillar is structurally unnecessary. These small, dark pillar rooms or pillar crypts have been interpreted as an architectonic representation of an aniconic deity worshipped in earlier, prehistoric times as stalactites and stalagmites in sacred caves. Frescoes also show double axes embedded in column capitals. Similar patterns of association are known from caves where double axes and dagger blades were found embedded in stalactites.' It is worth considering the possibility that the pillars in these rooms stood as markers of perpetual liturgy. Their occurrence in association with storage areas suggests sanctification and/or protection of these areas. This aspect of perpetual liturgy is

also suggested by the frequent association of Minoan bronze figurines with sacred caves and pillar rooms.⁶¹

Plan of Houses A and F, Ayia Irini, Kea, Second Palace Period. The town is composed of buildings which in some cases (such as House A) resemble Minoan houses, while others (such as House F) are more rectangular and axially constructed.



House A also employs terraced construction techniques similar to those discussed in Chapter 3 in connection with Monastiraki. House

A's court need not be central to the rest of the building to be regarded as a Minoan feature: similar off-centre courts are found at Nirou Khani and Myrtos Pyrgos. The staircase-and-entry combination (35) and auxiliary staircase (29) in House A was a common feature at Akrotiri that is also found on Crete, as is the bipartite division of the building into storage/work and living areas with a west orientation for the storage/work rooms, and the presence of figural frescoes.

Frescoes in the more secluded hall above room 31 included motifs that would have been common on Crete, including a bluebird frieze, 'adder marks', spirals, floral/rosettes, and possibly a griffin wing.⁶¹ Interestingly, the splash pattern which decorated the more public or accessible hall (room 39) opening off the court was also found in room 6 of the Temple (discussed below) perhaps serving to create a visual link between the House and the Temple. It is probably no accident that the hunting and chariot scenes represented elsewhere on the site by dogs, fallow deer, horses, chariots, and men in Mycenaean garb contrast with the style of Cretan provincial houses and has suggested mainland influence to some.⁶⁶ Other houses on the site have very different room arrangements. Most notable in its contrast to House A is House F which consists of a series of rooms arranged in a linear fashion, one behind the other [841].

The fixed hearth in the courtyard (room 36) of House A (not pictured here) may reflect a mainland influence; however it also recalls the altar in the central court at Mallia. A number of activities including ceremony, food preparation, and industry connected with metallurgy could have been carried out there. It seems to be a more likely candidate for such activities than the enclosed and unventilated room 30 where some other explanation should be sought for the burnt debris found there. The axuality and later addition of the west suite of rooms, 1-4, suggests that they were probably locally designed and executed. Although Cummer and Schofield, who published the building,⁶⁷ compare the 'toilet' in room 24 to the 'toilet' in the Domestic Quarter at Knossos, it bears little structural resemblance to that feature."

House A incorporated a recognizably Minoan exterior in terms of overall form and disposition, and a familiar Minoan interior in terms of its fresco decoration, architectural features, and internal circulation patterns. The incorporation of a Minoan spatial arrangement, Minoan architectural features, and the use of Minoan objects at Ayia Irini House A suggest modes of temporal patterning in the behavioural routines of daily life that are recognizably Minoan.

An analysis of coarseware pottery from Ayia Irini has demonstrated that a variety of industrial objects copied Minoan shapes, but were locally produced.⁹ Notable among these are objects called fire-boxes which may have been used for the production of aromatic substances. A strong foreign presence at Ayia Irini has been suggested based on the introduction of weaving technology and an increased standardization of various items. It has been suggested that weaving practice and textile production was under the control of a strong local elite that used Minoan cult paraphernalia and manipulated Minoan religious symbols to reinforce power, status, and symbolic ties to Crete.¹⁰ The Minoan architectural features incorporated into House A would have served as one more powerful set of symbols alluding to strong Minoan cultural influence. The social conditions generated by such influence may have been far more favourable to the Minoans and the elites on Kea than any actual political domination.

It is of interest that some houses at Akrotiri incorporated Minoan architectural features, and that at least one was clearly altered to make it more Minoan-looking. This did not occur at Ayia Irini or Phylakopi, where only a single house incorporates Minoan architectural features. This may have been a result of Akrotiri's place in the 'western string' of islands and its close proximity to Crete, indicating more frequent exchanges, more Minoan ritual practices, and possibly a stronger Minoan residential presence.

There have been many attempts to interpret these influences, sometimes referred to collectively as evidence for a Minoan Thalassocracy or sea-empire of sorts, by tracing Minoan-Cycladic power relations, elucidating degrees of influence, listing or quantifying Minoan traits, or studying economic relations.¹¹ The indigenous and foreign elements have been debated with the foreign elements interpreted as either dominant or emphasized, or dismissed as irrelevant.¹² This should be taken into account in considering what may be at stake for modern observers in evaluating 'non-Greek' Minoan influence and 'Greek' Mycenaean influence in various parts of the Bronze Age Aegean.

Religious practices

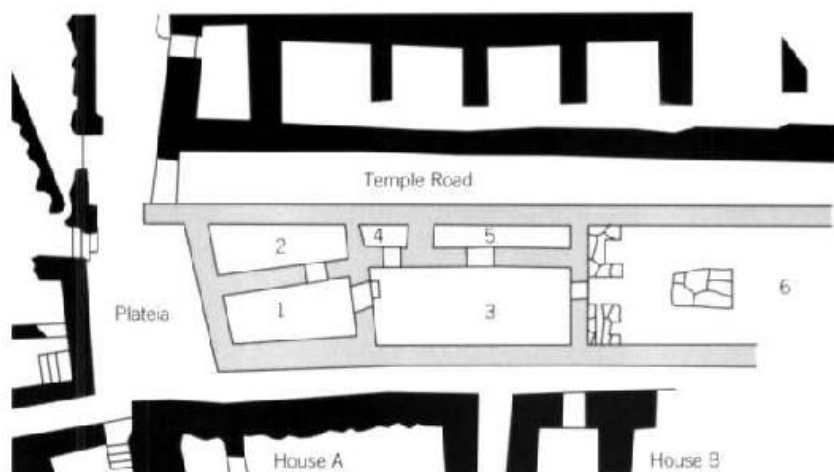
The Bronze Age temple at Ayia Irini, Kea

The Kea Temple was a regional development that merits discussion for the atypicality of its layout, its spectacular hoard of Minoan-style terracotta statues, and its long history of importance to Aegean and later Greek religion. The Temple does not date earlier than the fifteenth century BCE. It continued in use into the Graeco-Roman period, and it had become a shrine dedicated to the god Dionysos by the sixth century BCE if not earlier.⁷³

The preserved remains of the Temple form a long and narrow trapezoidal structure in which the northwestern wall is not square, but angles inward towards the south [85]. This difference in orientation led the excavator, John Caskey, to suggest that rooms i and 2 which make up the northwestern end of the building were laid out before the main axis of the existing structure was established. The location of the entrance is uncertain, although it may have been at the southeastern end of room 6 which was lost as a result of encroachment of the sea." Room 6 is a rectangular hall which takes up the full southeastern end of the structure and appears in plan to contain several built stone installations. It opens on to room 3 at its northwestern end. Room 3 is also a rectangular hall which is laid out so as to accommodate two small and narrow rooms (4 and 5) which run along its northeastern side. Room 3 opens on to room i from its north corner, and room i, in turn, opens on to room 2. There is a small court or gathering place at its closed west end which is connected to roadways running along the north and south sides of the Temple. The court is oriented roughly to the north and appears to be twice as long as it is wide. Its location, orientation, and proportions recall (at a modest scale) similar design features in the Minoan palaces.

In addition to acting as a place for the community to gather, the court might have served as a location for public ritual or as a staging area for processions connected with cult activities in the Temple. Such processions could have moved simultaneously down the north and south roads, meeting up in front of room 6. Another possibility is that the processants circumambulated or walked around the building. Procession frescoes from Knossos and Akrotiri indicate that such activities were not uncommon.⁷⁴ An analysis of the plan indicates that if a visitor (worshipper?) entered the building from room 6 at the southeastern end, he or she would then proceed into room 3, and only

then gain access to the other rooms.



85

Plan of the Temple from Ayia Irini, Kea, Second Palace Period through the eighth century BCE.

Parts of at least 32 female terracotta statues were found in room i, a space thought to be capable of accommodating as many as 100 statues [861. Their date corresponds roughly to the later part of the Neopalatial Period (Period VII of the Temple roughly corresponds to LM 1B). The statues range in height from about 0.7 m to about 1.35 m. All of them are standing, and with one exception they have their hands placed on their hips in what John Caskey called a 'dancing' position.'" Miriam Caskey prefers to interpret the figures as dancers rather than divinities, citing their relative similarity to each other and the unlikely possibility that 50 statues should represent a single goddess or that so many goddesses could be represented.⁷⁷ This dancing posture could also indicate an attempt by the artist to model or depict the legs beneath the skirt. This position or gesture of standing with the hands placed on the hips is found on one Minoan bronze figurine and on a number of seals in addition to the terracottas. It appears to be exclusive to females.

86

Terracotta female figurine, Ayia Irini, Kea, Late Neopalatial Period. Found with parts of at least 31 other female terracotta statues in room

1, ranging in height from about 0.7m to about 1.35 m. The original excavators have suggested that the women depicted represent dancers, while others argue that they are divinities. Note the handson-hips gesture which is found on one Minoan bronze figurine and on a number of seals found in Crete and on the mainland.



Certainly, the Kea Temple represents its own unique context which merits a systematic study. However, it is not clear why 50 statues gesturing in similar or identical ways should not represent 50

goddesses. A much later Bronze Age parallel can be cited in the open air Hittite shrine at Yazilikaya where a relief depicts a procession of 66 deities separated by gender, and largely indistinguishable except for the seven highest deities which are emphasized by their size and their attributes.⁷⁸ This is not to suggest identical situations for Kea and Yazilikaya; we certainly understand little enough about Aegean religion(s) to make sweeping generalizations about this material based on what seems unlikely to modern eyes.

The only Minoan bronze religious figurine which makes this hands-on-hips gesture is a female purported to be from a temple context at Palaikastro. At least four different seals depict females making this gesture.⁷⁹ In two instances, the female is rendered in hierarchic scale between two other figures making the same gesture [871.R0 In the third seal (photograph (871) both figures are bent over as if subordinated to the central figure." The flanking figures might be interpreted as attendants, priestesses, worshippers, or minor deities in the case of the flanking females. Two of these seals also depict altars in association with free-standing baetyls (columns or standing stones) and 'sacred' trees. Such representations have been connected with the worship of aniconic deities."z The central figures on the seals making the hands-on-hips gesture may represent epiphanies (appearance of a deity) based on their size, location, and association with the altars. Based on the evidence of the seal representations, the terracotta statues might be interpreted as attendants, deities, deities and minor deities, or as stand-ins for a particular class of worshipper.R3

Parts of seven female terracotta statues were found in room 2, and many of their pieces join pieces of statues found in the room i debris. It has recently been suggested that the breaking of ceremonial vessels shaped like the head of a bull (rhyta) formed a part of Minoan ritual symbolizing the sacrifice of a bull."⁸⁰ Ethnographic evidence has connected breakage, especially of prestige items, to a host of different cultural practices including the ritual disposal of religious objects, sacrifice, appropriation of power, and death of the owner. The idea that such practices could be extended to statues is worth considering. If the statues represented particular worshippers, their breakage might have been connected with the death of the individual represented. Another possibility is that the local inhabitants treated the broken pieces as relics that were too precious to discard in a normal fashion and which became mixed up in the course of the building's long history. Or perhaps the distribution of the fragments was just a product of chance.

It is important to distinguish between the archaeological evidence,

which is (relatively) constant, and the theories and interpretations which try to make sense of the evidence. Despite the attractiveness of the current explanations, we must keep an open mind that new discoveries and/or future generations of scholars coming up with new insights may develop equally plausible or even better explanations. New insights may be gained by looking at the evidence from a different perspective, by confronting the evidence with different interpretative models and comparative analogies, or by constructing a more detailed and logical argument to refute an explanation that seems insufficient.

A single male bronze figurine from the Ayia Irini Temple dates to the same period as the terracotta statues.⁵⁵ It was found along with a small bronze boat in room S of the Temple." Room S served as a storeroom for cult equipment located under a stairwell in the Neopalatial Periods? As we have seen, bronze figurines in architectural contexts tend to be located in or near storage areas. The larger rooms, 3 and 6, which contained no Neopalatial debris, were apparently cleaned out. Although this particular bronze is not illustrated here, the gesture is depicted above on the so-called Mother of the Mountains sealing from Knossos (see 55a) where it is being made by a male worshipper. It consists of raising the fist to the forehead while the other arm remains at the side and is commonly referred to as the 'Minoan salute'. It is most often made by male bronze figurines in ritual contexts such as sacred caves (see below) and peak sanctuaries.



87

Photograph and drawing of seal impressions showing the hands-on-hips gesture, from Mycenae, Late Helladic. Note the subordinate position of the two bent-over figures in relation to the standing goddess in the photograph, and the hierarchic scale of the female in the drawing.

The significance of other gestures is not always so clear-cut. The characteristics of this figurine can be clearly contrasted in opposition to those of the terracotta statues as follows: male/female; small/large; gesture of worship/gesture of authority; context: closet?/context: cella?; subordinate/dominant; hidden/visible. Whether the terracotta statues were worshippers or deities (or both), the evidence from the Temple indicates that the celebration of females was emphasized.

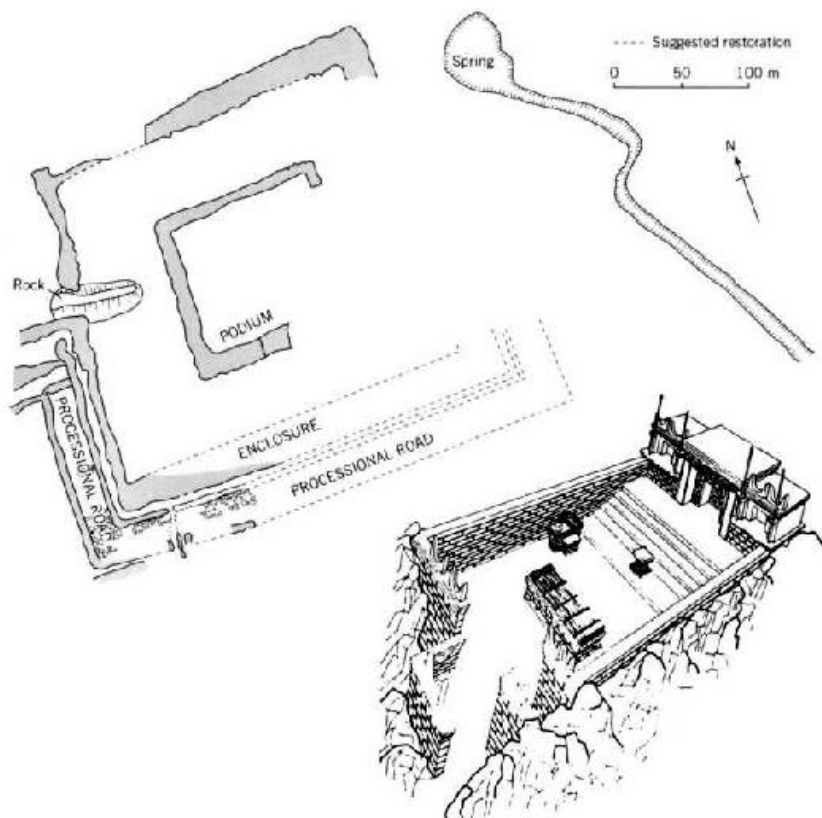
Reconstructing ritual and ideology at Kato Syme

The site of Kato Syme is located in southeastern Crete on the slopes of

Mount Dikte where it overlooks the south coast of the island from a height of 1,130 m. Kato Syme is the site of an important Neopalatial sanctuary (Late Minoan I c.1650-1450 BCE) that was founded in the Protopalatial Period and was rebuilt and added to over time continuing in use until the Roman Period 1881. The fact that it was associated with a large spring, possibly sacred, and located on the mountainside rather than on a mountain peak suggests that its rituals and cult were of different significance from those at other open air or peak sanctuaries.

The Neopalatial sanctuary is represented by three architectural phases and includes a 'monumental complex' open to the sky which was composed of three distinct elements." These elements include a massive enclosure wall defining a rectangular area (approximately 530 sq. m), a paved road (2 m wide) leading to the interior of this area and a rectangular, built structure (12.2 x 7.7 m) in the middle of the enclosure wall. The road follows a dog-leg approach. The central structure would have been open to the sky, as there was no evidence of internal supports for a roof.

It is believed that the ground-plan of the rectangular structure conformed to the representation of the tripartite shrine as depicted on the so-called Peak Sanctuary rhyton from Kato Zakro [891 as reconstructed by J.W. Shaw." The enclosure wall distinguishes Kato Syme from the Kato Zakro representation. The presence of the wall around the rectangular structure of the sanctuary between these two architectural features indicates that participants would have been free to either move back and forth, or circumambulate the sanctuary building in the performance of ritual action.



88

Plan of the Neopalatial sanctuary of Kato Syme, Crete, Second Palace Period, and a representation of a shrine on a stone rhyton from Zakro Palace. It is believed that the ground-plan of the sanctuary of Kato Syme conformed to the representation of the tripartite shrine depicted on the 'Peak Sanctuary' rhyton from Kato Zakro, seen in the next illustration.

A midden deposit was found between the enclosure wall, or temenos, and the sanctuary. A midden is a layer of black, greasy soil which includes animal bone remains. It is often taken to indicate human habitation connected with the preparation and consumption of food. In this type of context it would seem to indicate communal feasting connected with the rituals and ceremonies taking place around the enclosure. Such feasting is further indicated by the presence of cups and pots within the midden.

Among the most notable finds from the sanctuary are at least seven bronze figurines and many libation tables, a few with Linear A

inscriptions. Bronze seems to be a material especially favoured for dedicatory figurines in the Neopalatial Period. The widespread distribution of bronze figurines in the period might be seen as one more indication of the increasing wealth of Minoan civilization, as further indicated by the proliferation of villas. The character of the finds from Kato Syme would tend to suggest an elite status for those moving about the enclosure.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the relationship between luxury materials and peak sanctuaries indicates palatial influence. This is further indicated by the regulatory role which the so-called palaces played in the production and distribution of luxury goods such as bronze to the stratum of society that had access to them.

The fact that male bronze figurines outnumber female ones by a ratio of two to one indicates the presence of an elite stratum of Minoan society that was predominantly male procuring bronze figurines and making offerings at the peak sanctuaries." Again, turning to context on a larger scale, we know that the placement of votive figurines and statues in sacred areas to represent or stand in for the worshipper was a common practice in the Near East and in later, classical Greece. For example, a statue of the Neo-Sumerian King Gudea from Mesopotamia carried the inscription 'It offers prayers'."

One of the figurines from Kato Syme stands out particularly. It was a male bronze figurine holding its hands to its chest [901." The only other male bronze that makes this gesture wears a conical cap. Conical caps were often worn by kings in the ancient Near East. This particular figurine is highly detailed. The eyes are rendered with incised pupils. The long, snaky locks of hair, and the large eyes and ears, may have constituted individuating features, perhaps a particular individual who was a political or religious leader. It is described as having come from the 'sacred enclosure', although its precise location is unclear.

89

The 'Peak Sanctuary' rhyton from the Palace of Kato Zakro, Second Palace Period. The vessel, made of chlorite, was found in fragments in the west wing of the palace. It depicts in finely carved low relief a stone tripartite peak sanctuary surmounting a broad stair, with double horns along the roof lines and on what seem to be altars in the foreshortened front courtyard. Set in a rugged mountain landscape replete with agrimia and birds, the building also has four tall poles bracketed to the shrine's front facades. Traces of gold leaf have been

found adhering to the vessel, suggesting that it was at least partially covered in gold.



Like most Minoan bronze figurines this one from Kato Syme is dated stylistically to the Neopalatial Period." Style is the criterion most often used to date the figurines, the reason for this being the lack of stratified information. Strata are layers of soil containing archaeological artefacts that accumulate one above the other with the earliest strata at the bottom and the latest at the top. In Minoan archaeology, these strata are often dated by correlating the designs on the pottery found within them to a particular period in time. Unfortunately, many of the Minoan bronze figurines come from strata that have become mixed up, or from poorly documented or clandestine excavations. As a result, it becomes necessary to look at the style of the figurine and compare it to those few that come from securely dated layers or strata.



90

Bronze male figurine from Kato Syme, chryselephantine (gold and ivory) statuette from Palaikastro, and a Minoan seal showing a similar handsto-chest gesture; all Second Palace Period. While the bronze figurine has been interpreted as an adorant, the Palaikastro statuette and the male figure on the seal have both been interpreted as cult

figures or divinities.

We would like to suggest that the presence of this particular figurine within the sacred enclosure further emphasizes an elite connection. Bronze was the material favoured for dedicatory figurines in the Neopalatial Period. The use of bronze, the high degree of workmanship, the individuating features, and the rarity of its gesture among representations of males, would indicate that this particular figurine placed at Kato Syme represented a specific individual of higher status than other male bronze votives where the typical gesture is a hand raised to the forehead in the manner of a salute.

This particular gesture of holding the hands to the chest is made predominantly by female bronze figurines found mainly in caves and villas. However, in its only occurrence on a seal (see 90) it is being made by a male. In this composition, he stands between 'horns of consecration' and is flanked by a winged goat and a Minoan genius." This image has also been interpreted as a 'youthful male god' based on his relationship to the horns, his central position, and the flanking by supernatural animals which places him in what has been termed the 'realm of the fantastic'.

It has also been observed that this gesture is made by the stone and chryselephantine (ivory and gold) male figurine recently discovered at Palaikastro (see 90),^{9h} The statuette is remarkable for its realism and attention to detail including minute stippling of the hair rendered in steatite and the delicate rendering of the veins and toes. The technical skill of its maker is unrivalled in the art of the Bronze Age. Based on the interpretation of the seal figure as a divinity, the Palaikastro statuette has been interpreted as a cult figure, rather than as a worshipper. It has even been suggested that the statuette may have represented a youthful Zeus."

This interpretation is based on classical Greek myth, archaeological evidence that the Roman temple site of Diktaian Zeus overlies Minoan Palaikastro where an Archaic Greek 'hymn to the Kouros' was found, and on four offering tables from the peak sanctuary at Petsophas overlooking Palaikastro on which DI-KI-TE was inscribed in Linear A. Does the evidence suggest continuity of cult or the projection back in time of a Greek past into a dynamic, changing pre-Greek Bronze Age?

In trying to determine whether the status of male representations holding their hands to their chests is divine, we would like the reader to consider two other examples of supernatural animals flanking human figures. In the so-called Throne Room at Knossos (see 51), the

occupant of the throne was flanked by griffins. A similar, though not identical, situation can be found at Mycenaean Pylos. It has been suggested that a re-enactment of an epiphany (the appearance of a deity) took place in the Knossian Throne Room with a priestess occupying the throne.⁹ Still, it remains uncertain whether the occupant of the Knossian throne was a male or a female, a king or a queen, a priest or a priestess, or some other type of official.

The situation at Pylos is somewhat different since the Greek title of *wanax* or monarch is known from Linear B tablets found at Pylos.⁹⁹ One tablet also lists the word for throne or *to-no*. What, then, happens to a ruler who is placed in association with supernatural animals? Does this make the *wanax* divine or place him under divine protection? How strongly do the secular and the religious become conflated? In ancient Sumer, kingship was handed down from heaven, whereas in Egypt, the king or Pharaoh was a living god.¹¹

The point we are making is that the status of a figure placed between supernatural animals is not as straightforward in its interpretation as we might like it to be. Do the male bronze figurines, the seal example, and the Palaikastro statuette all placing their hands on their chests represent Minoan deities; do they represent early examples of Minoan ruler portraiture; or do they represent political leaders impersonating a deity? Or might they represent all of these things depending on their composition and context? What about the figurine from Kato Syme? The high degree of workmanship, the careful rendering of facial details, and the gesture which seems to be made only rarely by males of a particular status might be seen as indicating an important person, possibly a ruler, participating in a ritual involving circumambulation and feasting. Although we prefer to interpret the figurine as the representation of a ruler, the reader should feel free to draw his or her own conclusions based on the information provided or by following up the references given in the footnotes.

The Diktaian Caveat Psychro

As noted above, most of the Minoan bronze figurines attributed to peak sanctuary contexts are dated to the Neopalatial Period. The greatest concentration of bronze figurines is known from and attributed to cave shrines or sanctuaries. Female figurines are more frequently found in caves where they occur in equal number with male bronzes despite the fact that male bronze figurines outnumber females by a margin of two-to-one. This stands in contrast to the greater numbers of male-associated offerings such as weapons.¹⁰¹ Far

more male figurines are found at peak or open air sanctuaries. The less visible context of caves and villas for female figurines might be taken as indicative of an ideology of separate spaces.

Caves were initially used as habitation areas in the Prepalatial Period. However, by Middle Minoan I (c.2000-1800 BCE), caves began to take on cult functions. Among the earliest cave shrines are the Diktaian Cave at Psychro, and the Skoteino, Trapeza, and Kamares Caves. However, the finds at Kamares are limited to the pottery which bears its name. The offerings left in these sanctuaries tend to be found in layers of carbonized material, between crevices, and around stalagmites and stalactites. This last is especially true in the cave of Eileithyia, the birth goddess, now a Christian site visited by Cretan women.

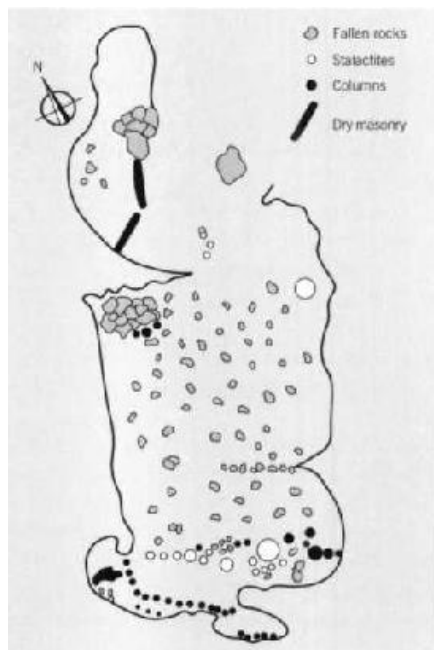
The largest concentration of bronzes is attributed to the Diktaian Cave [91] near the modern village at Psychro.¹⁰² It is located above the Lasithi plateau in eastern Crete on the slopes of the Diktaian mountain range, at an elevation of 1,025 m. Although identified as the Diktaian Cave, the legendary birthplace of Zeus by both Evans and Hogarth, the later written evidence is contradictory and the designation remains uncertain. The cave at Psychro may have been one of many sanctuaries connected with the worship of Zeus. As we find elsewhere, the cave at Psychro was initially used for habitation in the Prepalatial Period. Such a use of the cave raises the question of whether some aspects of Minoan religion evolved out of ancestor worship commemorating past inhabitants.

The cave at Psychro consists of three areas: a built terrace (approximately 4-5 m wide x 40 m long) leading to the entrance of the cave; an upper chamber (approximately 25 m wide x 20 m deep) that continued to receive offerings of bronze objects until the Geometric Period; and a lower chamber which ends some 65 m down from the entrance in a pool of water surrounded by crevices, stalactites, and stalagmites. The upper chamber included a Neopalatial altar and storeroom. The finds from the lower chamber dated predominantly to the Neopalatial Period and included some Soth bronze implements including bronze knives, spearheads, razors, tweezers, and double axes, as well as pottery and other items. All in all, the range of finds falls into five broad categories: (i) items connected with ritual feasting such as cups, jugs, and food remains; (2) gifts or offerings of a symbolic nature such as miniature vessels, and human and animal figurines, and votive double axes reminiscent of the gold ones from the Arkalokhori Cave [92]; (3) weapons such as daggers; (4) personal possessions which included jewellery; and (5) tools such as knives,

chisels, and axes. While we may tend to associate the dedication of jewellery with females, in Minoan representations both men and women wear jewellery.

91

Plan and photograph of the Diktaian Cave, near the modern village of Psychro, Crete. Evans believed this cave to be the one traditionally associated with the birth of the god Zeus, but it may have been one of several associated with the god.



A visit to the interior of the cave is normally a cold, damp, dark, and slippery experience, and in the summer it presents an extreme contrast to the outside which is hot, dry, and bright. The feeling such a visit evokes is one of otherworldliness and mystery. The stalactites in the cave, already mentioned above, received special attention in the form of double axes and dagger blades which were found embedded in them.¹⁰ As noted above, fresco representations similarly show double axes embedded in the column capitals of Minoan buildings.

92

Miniature gold votive double axes from the Arkalokhori Cave, Crete,

Second Palace Period. Votive bronze double axes reminiscent of these gold ones were found in the Diktaian Cave among other gifts or offerings such as miniature vessels and figures of humans and animals.



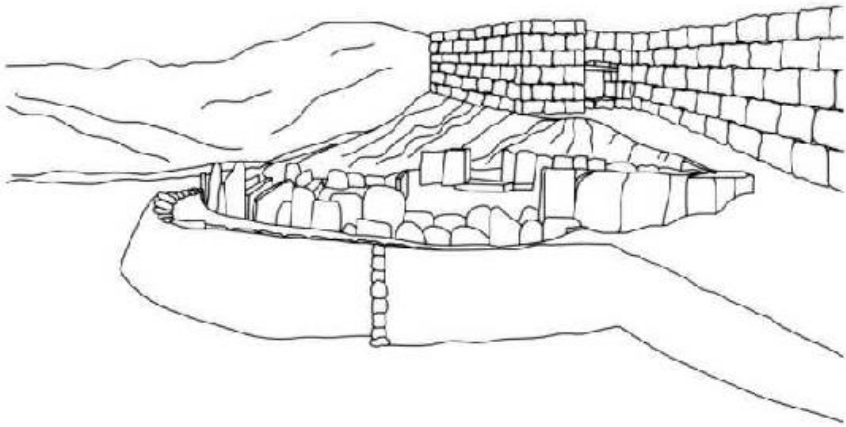
Many scholars believe that the pillar crypts associated with the Minoan palaces and villas once evoked experiences of darkness and mystery similar to a visit to a cave sanctuary. These small, dark pillar rooms or crypts might be seen as architectonic representations of aniconic deities worshipped as stalactites and stalagmites in sacred caves.¹⁰⁰ Could the pillar and/or double axe have been an aniconic cult statue, a site of baetylic cult? In a number of instances,¹⁰¹ the plan of the pillar crypt seems to be replicated on the upper floor with a column substituted for the pillar. Nanno Marinatos has connected these upper floor rooms with vessels used for holding and pouring liquids.¹⁰² She has chosen to interpret these as concerning the cult of a celestial deity connected with light, while the pillar crypt below should be connected with a chthonic (earth) deity connected with darkness. Both are, in turn, related to rituals connected with death

and regeneration. The underworld aspects of the cult practices in the Diktaian Cave have similarly been contrasted to the more open air aspects of cult practice at Kato Syme and elsewhere.'" Marinatos' interpretation also illustrates the same contrast that a visit to the cave evokes with the outside world.

We might reiterate that the pillar crypts in many Neopalatial palaces and villas are located close to storage areas, and in some cases" are even used as storage rooms. These often also include a recurring association with the double axe either as object or as an incised mark; sometimes they also include the placement of bronze figurines as discussed above. In addition to serving as sites for the performance of ritual, pillar rooms may also have served as sites of perpetual liturgy, and as sources of protection and sanctification of the storage area through the appropriation of symbols associated with the rituals carried out in the caves.

Burial practices

Sometime during the Second Palace Period on Crete, the mainland site of Mycenae became a powerful and wealthy centre, supporting a warrior class whose influence was to spread throughout the Aegean, profoundly transforming the entire region during the last 400 years of the Aegean Bronze Age. When the power centres of this Mycenaean civilization fell at the end of the second millennium BCE, the transformed remains of its culture, mixed with other indigenous and imported social and cultural practices, comprised the foundation of the world of Hellenic Greece (as detailed in Chapter 6).



93

Reconstruction of Grave Circle A of Mycenae, Late Helladic I, originally outside the citadel wall. Containing six deeply sunk graves, the circle was later incorporated into the citadel in a more monumentalized fashion, with its surface raised and its grave stelai re-erected, as shown in 113 below.

Mycenae came to be but one of a network of power centres scattered across the mainland, the island, and Crete, and was never, as far as we can ascertain, the capital of an empire similar to those of their contemporaries in the Near East such as the Hittites or the Assyrians. When uncovered by Heinrich Schliemann in the 1870s, several years after his discovery of Troy, the shaft graves of Mycenae's ruling warrior class were found to contain spectacular finds which fired the imagination of an entire generation of scholars familiar with Homer's epic poems the Iliad and the Odyssey, which described the military and amorous exploits of their heroes and gods. The Mycenae graves

being uncovered during the last quarter of the nineteenth century made dramatically palpable to many the lives of Agamemnon, Atreus, and Clytemnestra.

Illustration 93 depicts a reconstruction of a portion of what was to become a vast cemetery of Mycenae's ruling class, during an early phase in its development, close to the later walls of the citadel. During a short period in the history of Mycenae, most wealthy burials consisted of deeply dug rectangular shafts at the bottom of which were stone- or wood-lined and roofed enclosures. These chambers contained the body of the deceased, accompanied by many (often quite spectacular) grave gifts and offerings. The shaft was filled in with earth and rubble after interment, and, in the case of the earlier burials, the site of the grave was marked by an upright stele or tombstone. Two sets of these shaft graves have been excavated: a later one (now known as Grave Circle A, shown reconstructed here) uncovered by Schliemann, and an older and more recently discovered one (called Circle B). The nine famous monumental beehive or tholos tombs of Mycenae (see Chapter 5) post-date the later grave circle.

The illustration 1931 shows Grave Circle A after it was rebuilt on a monumental scale and prior to being encircled by an extension of the city wall, when its surface level was raised to allow access from the main citadel thoroughfare, with the original stelai repositioned at the new high ground level (discussed in Chapter 5).¹⁰⁹ Illustration 94 shows the limestone stele from Grave V, one of about 14 known sculpted stelai (two survive from the earlier Circle B, the rest from Circle A). Some nine unsculpted ones have survived. It once was thought that the sculpted tombstones, nearly all of which contain scenes of battle or hunting by men or animals, belonged to male burials, with the plain ones marking female graves; but there is no clear archaeological evidence for such a conjecture.

The stele, about one metre broad, depicts a charioteer in the lower panel rushing headlong in the direction of an individual (soldier?), who is carrying an upright sword thought by some to represent funeral games. There is a motif of running spirals below the chariot, and a double-spiral above the horse; the upper panel is completely filled with running spirals, repeating a motif found throughout the Aegean and Crete from the Early Bronze Age onwards. The relief is simple, sharp, shallow, and schematic, and would have made a dramatically crisp silhouette in the sunlight.

Bronze blade of a dagger with a gold, silver, and black niello inlay, from Grave IV, Grave Circle A, Mycenae, c.24 cm long. The scene depicts a lion hunt, with four men attacking the lion with spears and bow; a fallen comrade lies beneath the forepaws of the advancing animal. Note the figure-of-eight shield covered with ox-hide and the 'flying gallop' attitude of the animals.

Many of the shaft graves contained hundreds of luxury items, as well as highly decorated and embellished objects of daily or military use. Some examples are shown in the next two illustrations. Illustration 95 shows a spectacular gold full-size death mask. Made of hammered gold sheets, these masks would have covered the faces of the deceased, completing a finely made costume of durable materials. The eyes appear closed on this example, as was the more common practice, although occasionally they were open. The faces are individuated to a certain extent, conveying direct or schematized impressions of the face of the deceased person, and intended (unlike a portrait) literally to protect and render permanent the face's contours.

94

Limestone stele with charioteer from Grave V, Grave Circle A, Mycenae. The one-metre broad stele is one of about 14 sculpted stelae found in the Mycenae cemetery. The lower panel of the stele depicts a charioteer rushing towards an individual; below the chariot and in the upper panel are running spirals, and above the horse is a double spiral. The scene may depict funerary games, or may signify the power of the deceased in life.



Gold death mask from Mycenae, one of several found in the shaft graves, made of hammered gold sheet. It would have covered the face of a deceased male. As the masks found differ in appearance, it is likely that they bore a resemblance, however generic, to the person. No masks were found with women's bodies: children were entirely wrapped in gold leaf, and women wore elaborate diadems, and clothing with many gold leaf disk decorations. The graves of all

individuals were rich in offerings.



These masks are but a few of the many hundreds of gold items found in the shaft graves, ranging from jewellery and weapons to inlays and appliques for (mostly disappeared) furniture and costume. Illustration 96 shows the bronze blade of an inlaid dagger from Grave IV. It is inlaid with gold, silver, and black niello (an alloy of silver and sulphur) and shows a lion hunt; it is approximately 24 cm long.

The scale of the wealth displayed in the shaft graves at Mycenae, and the power of the warrior classes for whom such objects were made, had no immediate precursors in Greece, and the growth of regional centres such as Mycenae heralds an entirely new age in the Aegean. Whoever these rulers were, their activities were later recorded in a new script-Linear B-a departure from the language (Greek) of the (still undeciphered) Linear A script of Minoan Crete.

As we shall see in the next two chapters, these Mycenaean Greeks were to usher in a new age on Crete during the Late Minoan Periods II and III, both assimilating and transforming the social practices, art, and culture of the Minoans themselves, thereby serving as the agents of the dissemination of Aegean culture throughout the wider eastern Mediterranean. Those interactions with the Near East continued and considerably broadened the earlier exchanges between the Minoans and their eastern contemporaries so that by the end of the Bronze Age-the traditional date of the Trojan War and the widespread destruction of the Mycenaean and Cretan citadels and cities in the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE-the Aegean world will become, artistically, economically, and culturally, a part of that wider eastern Mediterranean world, both areas having been changed in consequence.



5

The Mycenaean palace at Pylos

The so-called Palace of Nestor at Pylos is among the most carefully documented sites we have looked at.' It is significant for a number of reasons including its fresco programme, painted plaster features, careful architectural layout, the well-documented context of its finds, and a significant archive of Linear B tablets. The following discussion will examine the issues involved with the reconstruction of its fresco programme, building techniques, the context of portable objects from the building, and the function of the palatial compound.

If we were to think of Pylos in modern terms we might conceptualize it as the corporate headquarters of the Late Bronze Age Peloponnese. Pylos is ideally situated on the hill of Ano Englianios with a nearby harbour facility, fertile surroundings, and a central location in Messenia in western Greece.

Although Pylos was mentioned by the geographer Strabo (63 BCE? 24 CE), who argued for a more northern location near Elis, it was not accepted as Nestor's Pylos until Wilhelm Dorpfeld excavated three tholos tombs north of Navarino Bay in 1907. The presence of such tombs suggested an elite stratum of society which would have lived in a monumental structure. This hypothesis led to the formation of a joint Hellenic-American expedition in the 1920S with Carl Blegen of the University of Cincinnati leading the American contingent. Exploratory digging began on 4 April 1939. On that first day, five clay tablets bearing Linear B inscriptions were found. These were the first Linear B tablets discovered on the Greek mainland.

Blegen was one of the early archaeologists to formulate a strategy for the excavation of his site that was systematic and aimed to achieve swift results. He began his first season by laying out eight long and narrow exploratory trenches in various directions to ascertain the limits of the palace. Over 600 Linear B tablets were recovered that first season, which was interrupted by the Second World War and not

resumed until 1952.

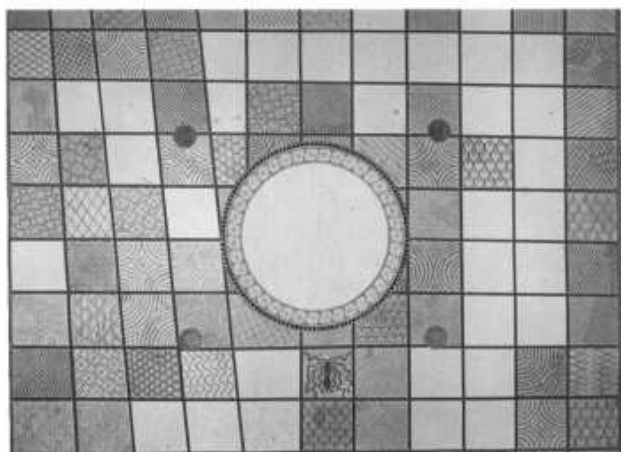
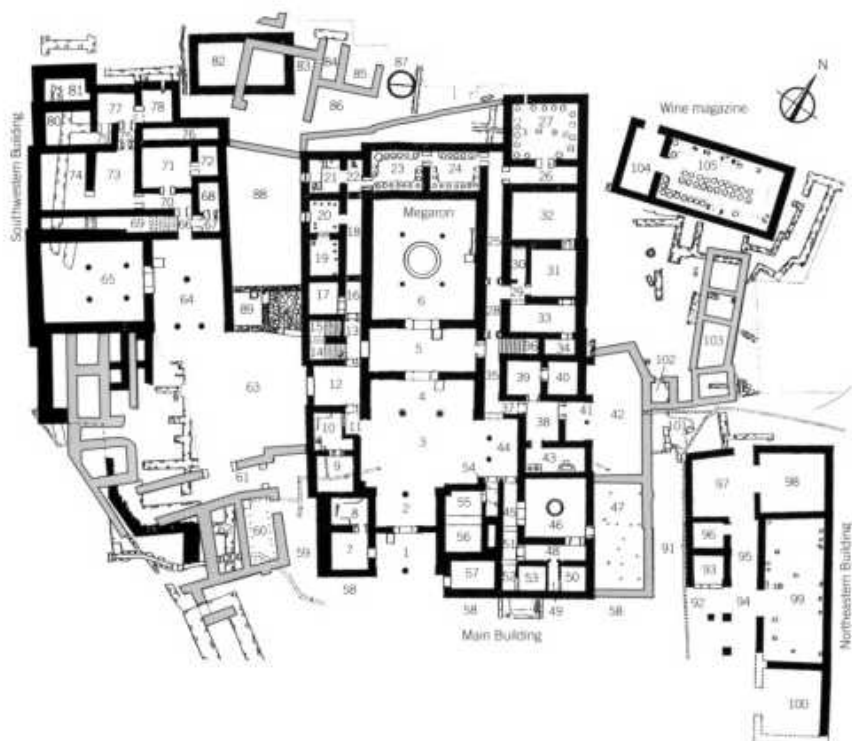
Detail of 100

The palatial compound [971 at Pylos consists of four separate structures that are initially dated to Late Helladic IIIA or around 1300 BCE. Their destruction is placed between 1230 and 1200 BCE. According to Blegen, the building sequence begins with the southwest building, followed by the main building, the wine magazine, and the northeast building. The exterior wall of the main building has been reconstructed on all but the northeast side.

The heart of this compound was the main building. It is not large and, at 30 X 55 in, it would fit easily within the central court at Knossos. The core element of the main building is the so-called megaron. This term and its modern connotations were discussed briefly in Chapter 2. Although the term might be more suitably applied to Pylos because of its alleged historical significance, a number of scholars have suggested abandoning the term altogether.² The megaron at Pylos represents a more refined and regularized variation of the structure found at Dimini as well as early Troy. It maybe said to consist of a hall and porch structure of rectangular outline where the porch is approximately one-half the depth of the inner hall with access to a corridor along its side giving access to a series of small rooms. The internal arrangement of the main hall was dominated by a large circular hearth surrounded by four columns. As discussed earlier, all megarons incorporate slight variations of this basic arrangement.

Many of the building techniques employed at Pylos appear quite similar to those used earlier by the Minoans. These include the use of a timber and rubble core in the interior walls, which were usually covered with plaster. The exterior walls were constructed of ashlar blocks of poros limestone, many containing dovetail mortises or clamp cuttings to secure them to the rubble core and the use of square dowels to hold horizontal timbers along the outer face of blocks with the occasional use of mortar. Like Minoan ashlar, the ashlar blocks at Pylos are cut back in a V for easy fitting so that the joints between the blocks could be filled with clay and small stones. Mud bricks were used to construct the upper storey walls and were also used for repairs. An ashlar block with a double-axe mason's mark carved on it has been found beneath room 7. This block and a horn of consecration built into a palace wall may indicate strong Minoan influence prior to the construction of the Mycenaean megaron.

A wealth of objects stored in the palace provide scholars with valuable clues regarding the function of the building. Scattered throughout were bits of ivory, silver, gold, worked stone, and bronze. Although many of these items were burned beyond recognition, these bits of bronze were believed by Blegen to constitute door fixtures corresponding to the stone thresholds and door jambs attested throughout. The terrible fire that spread throughout the building at the time of its destruction is discussed below.



Plan of the palace at Pylos, Late Helladic IIIA, c.1300-1200 ecE. The compound includes four separate structures: a twostoried main block with a large megaron hall fronting on a court, with a throne on the east wall facing a central circular raised hearth; a sanctuary building to the southeast; a storage building on the northeast; and a large two-

storied western block with a megaron-like hall at its centre. The western wall of the west block is built upon the top of a retaining wall, which is indented in a manner similar to the western facades of the earlier Minoan palaces. The detail shows the painted plaster floor in imitation of rock work. Note the single octopus below the hearth.



98

The 'Tripod Tablet', a Linear B tablet from the palace at Pylos, dated to the thirteenth century BCE, which confirmed the decipherment of this script as an early form of Greek.

Massive quantities of pottery were concentrated in certain areas of the palace. Tall, stemmed drinking cups known as kylikes as well as the bases of cups and bowls were particularly plentiful. Some 600 were found in rooms 9 and 10 alone. An attempt has been made to connect these items with the ritual banqueting that is depicted in the fresco programme here. Another possibility is that they were being stored for export. The stockpiling of oil and wine was indicated by the Linear B tablets and confirmed by the presence of storage jars found in the palace and in the wine magazine to the northeast of the palace. A concentration of bronze projectile points found in the Northeastern Building located to the southeast of the main building indicates a state of preparation for military activity. Let us now take a look at these various aspects of the compound in greater detail.

99

Linear B tablet from the Palace of Knossos, Third Palace Period. Like many such tablets, this one is a list of sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle, and was part of the extensive administrative apparatus of the palaces both on Crete and the mainland.

The megaron is entered through an H-shaped propylon or entryway

(1-2) with a single axial column between antae. This entire feature is asymmetrically aligned with the main hall. Layers of plaster around this and the other column bases in the palace preserved impressions of fluted wooden columns. The propylon gives access to a small court (3) which leads to the porch and forehall of the megaron. Raised rectangular areas next to this series of doorways have been interpreted as guard stands based on their context or positioning.

Adjacent to the propylon on the west are a pair of small connecting rooms 7 and 8 which contained the vast majority of the some 1,200 Linear B tablets found at Pylos [981. The term Linear B (discussed briefly in Chapter i) refers to the fact that the pictographic characters written on clay tablets with a stylus to represent syllables or entire words have a linear character. The 'B' refers to the fact that it developed later and out of Linear A', the undeciphered Minoan writing system. Linear B was initially discovered at Knossos 1991 by Evans and caused great surprise when it was discovered later at Pylos by Blegen. It remained undeciphered until 1952 when a young British architect by the name of Michael Ventris worked out that it was an early form of Greek, since dubbed Mycenaean Greek by scholars.' Linear B reflects an adaptation of the Minoan Linear A script to write Greek in much the same way that our modern alphabet is used to write a number of different languages. The fact that Linear B was adapted and adopted to write a language that it was not really suited for is reflected in a certain awkwardness of form. For example, the Greek word 'tripod' which is a pot with three legs is written 'ti-ri -po-de' using the Linear B script.

Most of the Linear B tablets found in rooms 7 and 8 were kept in baskets on shelves in these two rooms. Many miniature votive cups were also found in association with the tablets, indicating a ritualistic aspect to the functioning of the record-keeping centre. Although these rooms are often referred to as the 'archive', they were not an archive in the sense that the tablets were intended to be kept permanently. Such an intention would be indicated if the tablets had been purposely baked to preserve them. These rooms served more as a temporary record-keeping facility where the tablets might be disposed of when they ceased to hold any relevance for the palace bureaucracy. Other tablets were distributed within the building in such a way as to constitute a sophisticated network of administrative control over palatial collection, distribution, and manufacture. The distribution of the tablets has enabled scholars to reconstruct pathways followed by these early scribes in the performance of their daily routines.⁴



Map 3

Greek mainland: Neolithic and Bronze Age sites

The main hall of the palace is dominated by a large stuccoed hearth some 4 m in diameter with an inner ring of 3 m in diameter. It is decorated with a painted stucco design depicting a running spiral motif around the top, and a flame pattern around the side. The four fluted columns that surrounded it probably supported a clerestory with a balcony to admit light and draw off smoke through the clay chimney which was composed of two sections. The floor of this hall was also coated with plaster that was decorated by means of an incised grid consisting of over 100 small squares painted with non-

figural patterns (see 97). The absence of symmetry in the arrangement of the grid has been contrasted to earlier Minoan floor patterns which were executed with more precision and logically related to the architecture.'

There have been two suggested sources for the inspiration of these painted floors. One idea is that they imitated carpets. Another is that the non-figural patterns resemble various types of stone in imitation of Minoan paved slab floors. The only figural element on the floor of the main hall is a solitary octopus, perhaps serving as a focal point towards where something was placed in the small hollow set against the wall, possibly a throne. What evidence do we have for a throne besides a painted octopus, an empty space, and an analogy with the Throne Room at Knossos which is amplified by the evidence of a griffin fresco at both sites?

Pylos is the only Bronze Age Aegean palace whose royal function has been verified by Linear B tablets. The title 'wanax' from which the Greek word for palace is derived is attested at Pylos. The word for throne is attested in a Linear B text from Pylos as to-no, a chair made out of valuable imported materials such as ebony and gold.' Similar chairs are known from both Egyptian art and texts. A narrow channel with depressions at either end was cut in the floor so that one depression sits next to the hollow interpreted as supporting a throne. It has been suggested that this channel served as a place to pour liquid offerings or libations as homage to a powerful leader.



100

The 'Lyre- Player' fresco from the central hall or Throne Room at Pylos. This restored musician was part of an elaborate fresco programme that covered the interior walls of the megaron.

The megaron was decorated with an elaborate, though now fragmentary, fresco programme that can be related to the layout and arrangement of the architecture. Scholars have advanced two competing reconstructions for the arrangement of the frescoes in the Throne Room or main hall. The more well-known reconstruction has antithetic pairs of lions and griffins flanking the throne, based on an analogy with Knossos. It is strengthened by the long iconographic tradition in the Aegean and the Near East of powerful or exotic animals flanking revered objects. Evidence, however, only exists for a single pair of animals at Pylos and seal representations often depict seated figures with animals to one side. One pair of animals must be given serious consideration as a distinct possibility. Their placement in the hall may be to provide the occupant of the throne with protection, strength, and stability, perhaps even placing him or her in the realm of the fantastic or supernatural (or on an island as a living hero).

A recent study of the fresco remains from the forehall 5 and main hall 6 by Lucinda McCallum ties them together thematically and

compositionally.' These fragments include individuals carrying offerings, the face of a bull, a bull that appears to be trussed up on a table, banqueteers, a musician playing a lyre [1001, and a fantastic bird. McCallum looked at the frescoes in combination with the painted floor which she sees as providing a unifying motif linking the two rooms and placing the frescoes in a compositional unity tied to the political function of the throne.

The programme treats procession as a theme that consists of leading the bull among a procession of gift bearers in forehall S f 1011. This theme is continued in the main hall with a scene of tribute in the form of bull sacrifice along with an accompanying banquet that includes the lyre player. Such themes enjoy a long history in the ancient Mediterranean stretching from Crete to the Near East.

Bull sacrifice is represented on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus and plays a role in classical Greek festivals. The leading of bulls in procession is depicted in the frescoes in the palace of Zimri-Lim in Mari, the New Kingdom Egyptian palace at Malkata, as well as the Mycenaean phase of the Minoan palace at Knossos while ritual banqueting is frequently represented in Minoan and Near Eastern art. Gift hearing in the Mycenaean world is further attested in a Linear B tablet in which gifts are brought to various deities."

A second, smaller megaron or hall at Pylos containing fresco decoration and a painted plaster hearth is part of a cluster of rooms (45-5S) making up the southeast wing of the main building. Though smaller in size, the hearth repeats the flame and spiral design of the main hall. Also, as in the main hall, the smoke may have been carried off by a chimney made of large clay pipes. Blegen's interpretation of the room as a Queen's hall is unusual considering the fresco decoration. The preserved evidence indicates a frieze of ten lions and several griffins running to the left. Blegen's reading is based on an analogy or comparison with modern assumptions made about the function of the smaller of two decorated halls in the east wing at the Palace of Knossos. He tries to reconcile what he terms a 'bold masculine spirit' of the frescoes with the 'delicate' style of the decoration of the hearth. McCallum's more sophisticated reading of the evidence sees the display of powerful animals as a metaphor for the king's power that is further echoed by the familiar arrangement of the room and the presence of the hearth.

Although no less accessible than the main hall, the route to this small megaron is less straightforward, indicating that it may have served as a more private meeting chamber for palace elites. The later

addition of courtyard 47 blocked the eastern entryway to this room and further heightened its atmosphere of privacy. Scattered holes in the courtyard led Blegen to suggest that looms were set up here for the manufacture of textiles while Shelmerdine sees this as a workspace for making perfume.⁹ The numerous stirrup jars found in the court, however, make it more likely that manufactured perfume was kept here while the steeping process was carried out elsewhere.

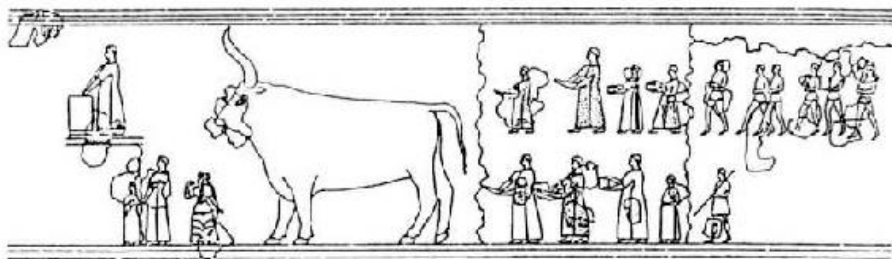
Near the smaller megaron was a small rectangular room (43) that contained a clay bathtub permanently set into a clay bench. It has been dubbed a bathroom and connected with the smaller megaron with which it shares a common wall. The bench is accompanied by a step to aid the user in getting into it. The bathtub itself is decorated with a running spiral motif. The stuccoed floor of the room slopes towards a hole connected to an underground drainage system. Drainable bathtubs are mentioned in a Linear B tablet, as is a servant acting as a bath-pourer.¹⁰ Also in the room are two large jars set into a stuccoed stand. One of these was used to store pottery including a number of kylikes, possibly for taking liquid refreshment out of the other jar.

Despite the fact that the smaller megaron and the bathroom share a common wall, they cannot be considered related to each other in terms of use. The two rooms are separated from each other by five thresholds which would require an individual to pass alongside an open court (3) to get from one room to the other, making such a connection unlikely. The bathroom is more logically connected with the east entrance (40) which is just two thresholds away. The close relationship between the bathroom and the east entry may indicate a connection between entering the palace, cleansing, and purification. This nexus of relationships replicates an arrangement that was somewhat common on Crete, namely the association of basins of various types with entryways.¹¹ The later blocking of the east entrance by court 42 indicates a change in function for this area, first of all by limiting external points of access to the main building, and second by creating additional space for the performance of some activity through the addition of the court.

The rear of the palace behind the main hall seems to have been devoted to a row of rooms used for the storage of oil. Many of the storage jars were permanently fixed into place in clay benches in adjoining rooms which could be directly reached from the outside through room 21 in the northwest corner of the palace. It has been suggested that the oil from these jars exacerbated the fire that destroyed the palace, perhaps even giving rise to a tremendous

explosion that caused the west wall to blow outward.

Reconstruction of part of the fresco programme of the megaron, Palace of Pylos. The reconstruction shows a procession in which a bull is being led among a group of gift bearers.



In its final phase of existence, the main building underwent several modifications. The addition of walled courts on the southeast has already been discussed. Access to the northwest part of the building was restricted by blocking the northwest corridor (18) and adding doorways to rooms 20 and 21.

The northeast wing consists of a row of storerooms that corresponds roughly to a similar group of rooms along the northwest. Both groups of rooms contained large quantities of various types of pottery. Blocking corridor 18, and emphasizing rooms 20 and 21 as points of contact between the storage areas of the palace and the outside, would have served to minimize contact between the storage areas and the ceremonial core of the main building. These changes seem more in keeping with the use of the building as an administrative and industrial centre where goods were produced and exchanged.

We would like to finish our survey of Pylos by briefly considering the surrounding buildings in the immediate area of the main building. The rectangular structure to the northeast of the main building has been identified as a wine magazine based on the character of finds. The main hall of this building contained storage jars arranged in a double row down the centre and along the wall. They are associated with a large number of clay sealings that carry the Linear B sign for wine.

The Northeastern Building is located to the southeast of the main

building. In the court (92), a small block painted with a scallop design is interpreted as an altar. Behind the altar is a small room (93) with two massive antae bases that Blegen refers to as a shrine. However, there is nothing about the character of the reported finds to support this assumption. The other rooms (97-Too) that make up the adjacent structure suggest a storage and industrial annexe. They contained obsidian cores, pottery, sealings, Linear B tablets, and hundreds of bronze projectile points.

The Southwestern Building shares a number of similarities with the main building including its megaron-style hall, and ashlar walls. Additionally, it has the indented trace which is so well known in earlier Minoan buildings. The arrangement of four interior columns is not symmetrical. Blegen hypothesized the presence of an additional two columns for a total of six and he is tempted to reconstruct a hypostyle hall based on similar features in earlier Minoan buildings.¹² However, given the arrangement of the remaining columns, it is not possible to symmetrically reconstruct a hypostyle hall in the Southwestern Building.

A complex network of rooms lies to the north behind the entrance (64) and megaron of the Southwestern Building. Many of them contained concentrations of pottery while room 78 at the back contains a drain and possibly served as a toilet. The suite of rooms including 77-81 becomes progressively smaller and can only be accessed by a tiny door way. All of this suggests that space within these rooms was highly manipulated, even 'devious', as Blegen maintains. Two adjoining cupboards (67-68) contained an excessive amount of cookware and wine jars. The cookware stored here, the massive quantities of drinking vessels in the main hall, the storage of wine, and the fresco decoration of the main hall all point to the performance of communal feasting for the promotion of loyalty and group solidarity. Because of its spaciousness or proximity to the palace proper, courtyard 63 might have been an appropriate location for such activities. With the character of the finds in the Southwestern Building, its less than careful construction, and its close relationship to the main building with two elaborately decorated halls, the Southwestern Building seems to be another likely candidate for a storage and work annexe.

We have briefly discussed the four separate structures that compose the Pylian compound, its decoration, patterns of access and circulation, and the character of the items found within. In considering the totality of these relationships, we have indicated that the palace was functionally zoned. We have also discussed how its use

was modified over time by changing those same patterns of access. It is of interest to note that in its final architectural phase access in the villas at Haghia Triadha was similarly restricted.

The Mycenaean palace at Knossos

It appears that the Minoan palace at Knossos was taken over by Mycenaean Greek-speaking mainlanders, who modified the remains of the ruined structure to serve their own mercantile ends [102]. This period is also characterized by the so-called 'palace style' of pottery which is only attested in Crete at Knossos in the Third Palace Period (LM II). Large, imposing, and stiffly portrayed, the representations of this style indicate a mainland influence to many scholars. Remembering that the vast majority of pottery used in these cultures is undecorated, the elaborateness of the painted designs and their rigid monumentality surely also connote the power and authority of a new ruling elite that was installed at Knossos, now the dominant centre on the island." It is to this period that the present state of the Throne Room is dated, along with its fresco decoration (51). In addition, there are a number of frescoes and fragments from the palace and surrounding neighbourhood that are stylistically dated to this Third Palace Period [103]. Included among these are the procession frieze found in pieces in what Arthur Evans called the Corridor of the Processions, on the southern side of the compound, and the fragment known to modern scholars as La Parisienne [1041.

102

View of western magazines or storage areas, Knossos Palace, Third Palace Period, reused and partially modified during Mycenaean control of the palace.



'Pa lace-style' storage jar from Knossos, Third Palace Period. Pot decoration in this style frequently uses somewhat formalized floral motifs painted on a light ground.

The so-called 'La Parisienne' fresco, Palace of Knossos, Third Palace Period. Although the context of this fragment is unknown, it may have been part of the 'Camp Stool' fresco shown in 105





105

Detail of the reconstructed 'Camp Stool' fresco, Palace of Knossos, Third Palace Period, depicting groups of seated men drinking from chalices in the presence of two larger female figures, possibly goddesses or priestesses. Shown here are two robed individuals seated on camp stools, one raising a chalice.

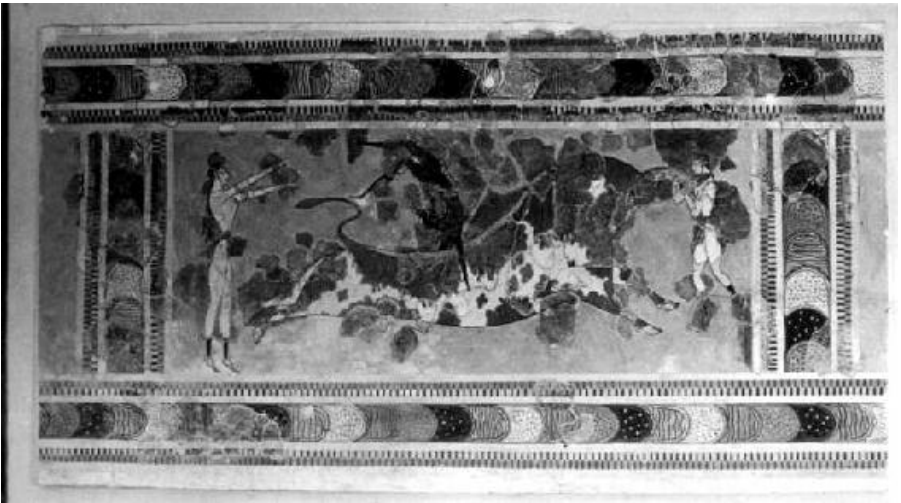


The original context of the latter fragment is unknown; it may have been part of a sequence of seated figures, collectively known as the Camp Stool fresco [105], which depicts groups of seated men drinking from chalices, in the presence of two larger female figures, possibly goddesses or priestesses. Standing male figures in robes seem to be servers. The knot which is prominently depicted binding the hair of the larger female figure known as La Parisienne turns up as an artistic motif in a number of different contexts: in ivory (from Knossos), in faience (from the Mycenae shaft graves); and on seals: where it appears in pairs, suspended from a column flanked by antithetic lions, associated with a double axe, and alone. As a result of these numerous depictions it has come to be regarded by many scholars as 'sacred'. Recent research has shown that various representations of the 'sacred knot' had significance as apotropaic devices and as a representational symbol of a Minoan goddess."

The former Procession fresco [1061, very substantially reconstructed by Evans' team, depicted what may originally have been a long sequence of individuals, apparently carrying offerings or other objects into the palace from the direction, most probably, of the main

southwest entrance from the west court. As is typical of many Minoan frieze paintings, the background is decorated with undulating bands of contrasting colours as depicted in the fresco of antelopes from Akrotiri on Thera. The marchers are both men and women.

The fragments making up the 'Taureador' fresco [1071] were found in the north half of the east wing of the Palace at Knossos where they had fallen from a room on the upper floor. General consensus arrived at through the study of stylistic details such as the border design which occurs in the depiction of chariot wheels on the mainland places them in Late Minoan II-III A (c.1450-1375 BCE)-after the Mycenaean takeover of Knossos and the general destruction of other Minoan centres. From these fragments it is possible to restore five panels, although it is only possible to restore the entire composition in one of them. In the words of Evans," the fresco depicts a 'male performer, of the usual ruddy hue, who is turning a back-somersault above the bull, ... two female taureadors [are] distinguished not only by their white skin but by their more ornamental attire': a reference to the variegated hue of the kilts worn by the white figures in contrast to the plain yellow worn by the reddish figure. Evans goes on to tell us that 'the girl acrobat in front seizes the horns of a coursing bull at full gallop, one of which seems to run under her left arm-pit. The object of her grip ... seems to be to gain a purchase for a backward somersault over the animal's back, such as is being performed by the boy. The second female performer behind stretches out both her hands as if about to catch the flying figure or at least to steady him when he comes to earth the right way up.' No doubt influenced by a romantic nostalgia for the American West, Evans placed these scenes in what he called the 'cowboy' class of bull sport representations.



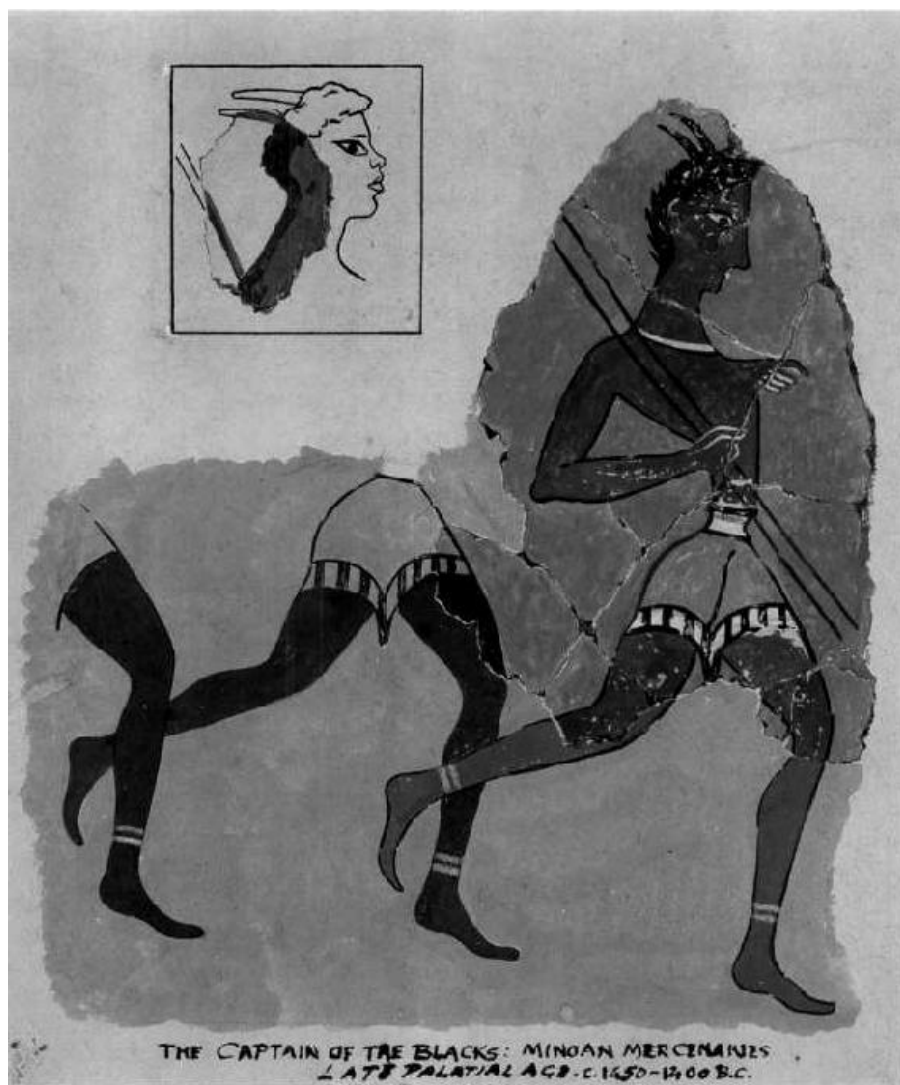
Most discussions of Minoan bull sports focus on whether the acrobatics depicted on the fresco are possible and where they would have taken place: whether in the central courts of the palaces or nearby, or whether they occurred at all." Enough representations exist in other media including seals, vessels, sculpture, and most recently on a Minoan fresco found in Egypt to indicate that some sort of contest between humans and bulls took place. In a few instances, such as on the Boxer rhyton (see Chapter 4), the depictions are violent.

The so-called 'Tau reader' or 'Bull-Leaping' fresco from the Palace of Knossos, Third Palace Period, whose reconstruction has elicited controversy about the gender identity of the figures, as well as about the possibility of bull-fighting ceremonies in Minoan Crete. See also 127.

Until recently, most Aegean archaeologists tended to accept Evans' assumption that the white bull leapers were female. Other possibilities include: (i) recent suggestions that the colour of the bull leapers was used to indicate a temporal sequence of steps in the representation of the individual carrying out the leap; (2) the emergence of young males from a 'feminine guise' through rites of initiation such as demonstrating the superiority of human males over the bull through a test of strength; and (3) alternative constructions of gender identity such as males appropriating female characteristics of gender identity for ideological purposes." With regard to the purpose of the games, it has recently been suggested that bull games are symbolic re-enactments of the hunt that played a crucial role in the earlier process of domestication of the wild stretching back to the Neolithic Period.'s

The fresco fragments known as the Captain of the Blacks [1081 were found outside the palace of Knossos near the House of the Frescoes. Although this piece is very fragmentary and lacking a context, it is dated stylistically to the Third Palace Period. While its lack of context provides little information about how it was experienced, we mention it here for the significance of its subject matter. This piece serves as important evidence in addition to the Blue Monkey fresco discussed in Chapter 4 of Minoan contact with Africa. The 'captain' is depicted wearing a bristly cap with horns that resemble a Nubian cap. He appears to be carrying a spear and he is being followed by at least one individual whose black skin indicates an African origin. Despite the different skin colour of the 'captain' and the individual behind him, the similar black and white border on their kilts indicates a connection. This piece is too fragmentary to reveal what was going on with certainty and there is no reason to assume that the 'captain' is in command. The peoples of Nubia were renowned in antiquity for their skill as soldiers and Nubian archers served as Egyptian mercenaries. Evans believed that this fresco represented palace guards. It serves as an important testament to the multiculturalism of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean.

feet are original in this particular segment. This fresco is part of what may have been a long sequence of individuals carrying offerings or other objects into the palace. The undulating bands in the background are typical of many Minoan paintings.



Haghia Triadha and Kommos

What appears to be a megaron was constructed over the ruins of the Second Palace Period villa annexe compound at Haghia Triadha [1091 (discussed in Chapter 4). The Haghia Triadha building is contemporary with other megaroid structures that appear on Crete at this time, for example at Gournia, where adjacent to the ruins of the small palace there were built two megaroid compounds virtually identical in plan to compounds found elsewhere in the Aegean since the time of Early Bronze Age Troy." This building is virtually denuded of all but its foundation courses, which, however, are sufficient to suggest a megaron of familiar rectangular type, with a large inner hall and smaller porches arranged axially.

The Haghia Triadha megaron was built on the north edge of what in earlier times was part of an upper courtyard belonging to the villa annexe compound. Its foundations were sunk deeply into earlier levels. There may have been additional rooms and buildings in this area forming part of a larger megaroid palace, but all that remains is what appears to have been the main building or main hall area. Traces of pavement and drainage were uncovered along the south edge of the hall as shown in the plan.

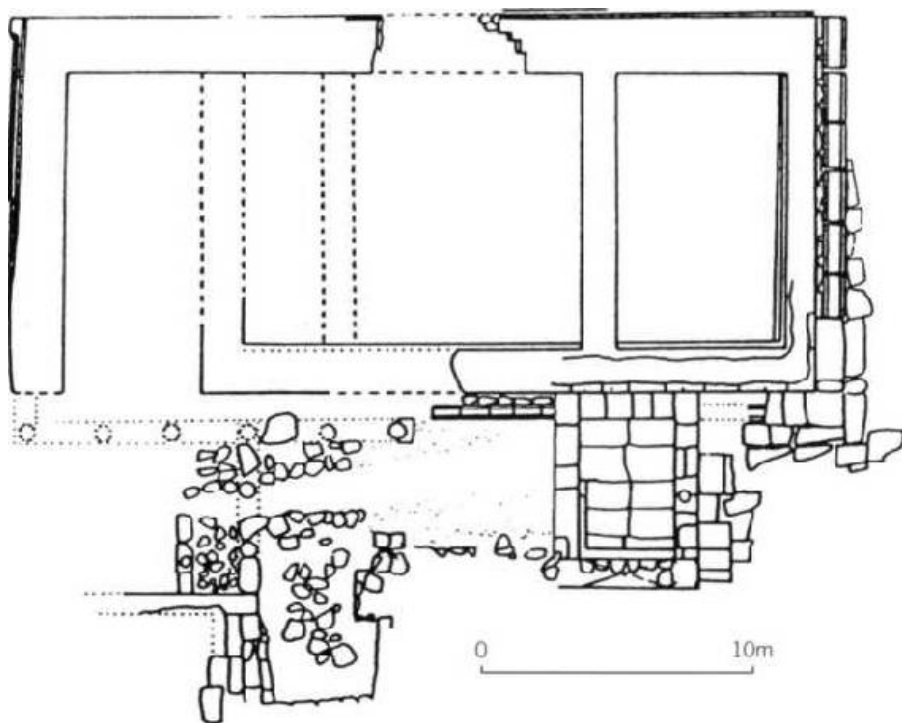
The site plan (looking from west to east) of the area to the northeast of (and on a lower level than) the megaron reveals walls and rooms built from the Late Minoan I to III Periods. The most striking section is the suite of eight rooms and an adjacent stairwell, fronting on a colonnade with alternating square piers and round columns [1101. The plan is virtually identical to the common types of stoa building familiar in classical times, which served a wide variety of purposes in the public squares or agoras of Greek cities, from shops and storerooms to meeting halls, banqueting facilities, and hostels or visitors' shelters associated with certain shrines.

Here at Haghia Triadha we have the form of a stoa a millennium older than these, whose usage may well have been similar to Hellenic ones, although evidence for its function is quite meagre. It most probably served a function similar to a virtually identical compound in the mainland Mycenaen citadel of Tiryns, which occupies a comparable position between the palace compound and the outer town area. Like the storage magazines of the earlier Minoan palaces, the Haghia Triadha and Tiryns compounds may have served a wide variety of uses in the manufacturing, storage, import, and export businesses of the palaces.

Fresco fragment called by Evans the 'Captain of the Blacks', Knossos, dated stylistically to the Third Palace Period. The 'captain' wears a bristly hat with horns that resembles a Nubian cap, and may be carrying a spear. Note the different skin colours of the two individuals.

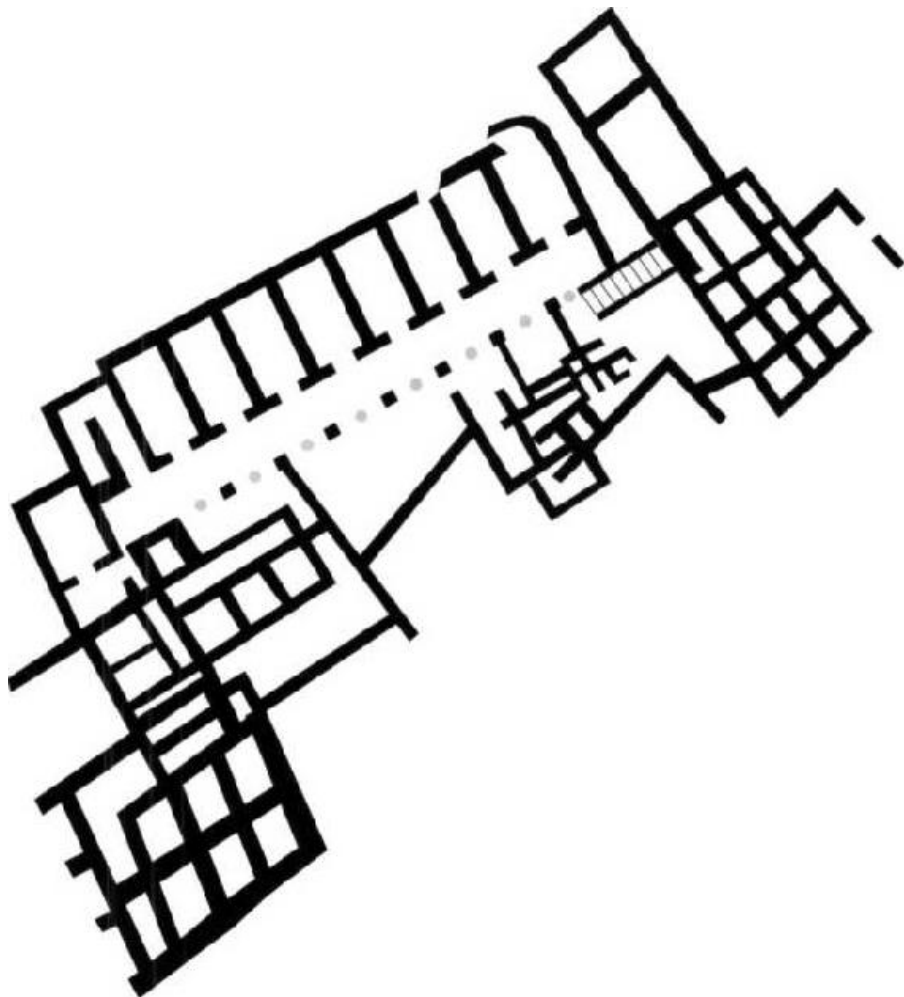
109

Reconstruction of the megaron compound at Haghia Triadha, built in the Third Palace Period over the remains of the Villa A and B complex.



110

Plan of the northern section of the stoa building at Haghia Triadha, contemporary with and to the north of the megaron palace in 109. It is very similar in design to a stoa building just inside the entrance to the mainland Mycenaean citadel of Tiryns.



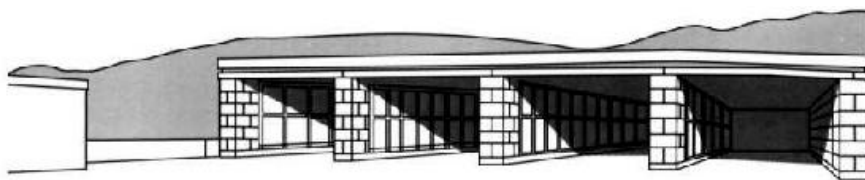
No such stoa building has been found at Mycenae or Pylos; if any existed, they might have been outside the citadels proper. Traces of a stoa have been identified at Tylissos (see 112), suggesting that the format was not unique to Haghia Triadha on Crete. At Mycenae, just inside the main citadel entrance (the Lion Gate), is a building referred to by excavators as the granary (visible in 113 below, adjacent to the ancestral Grave Circle A), which seems to have been used for the temporary storage of grain and other agricultural produce brought in from the estates or farms controlled by the palace. It is possible that the Haghia Triadha and Tylissos stoas had similar functions.

A stoa-like building is shown in [1111, which depicts a reconstructed view of a building whose foundations were discovered not far from Haghia Triadha, at the port of Kommos.²⁰ The structure has been reasonably taken to be a compound of ship-sheds, whose

long rooms open on to the sandy beach on which boats would be drawn up. The vessels could be stored and sheltered in the long chambers. There is no evidence that Kommos ship-sheds had any system of closure. It is likely, however, that the open ends of the sheds were closed off with wooden doors or fences.

The continuation of Minoan building techniques in the Third Palace Period

Although some isolated features of Minoan palatial architecture continue into the Postpalatial or Third Palace Period, the character of ordinary houses on Crete in the Postpalatial Period differs greatly from houses of the Second Palace Period. They tend to consist of one or more rooms of equal size arranged along an axis with doors placed in the short walls." Like their predecessors, these later inhabitants of Crete continued the earlier practice of terracing into the hillside when practical in order to take full advantage of the natural terrain.



111

Reconstruction drawing of ship-sheds, port of Kommos near Haghia Triadha. This stoa-like building has been interpreted as a compound of ship-sheds whose long rooms open on to a sandy beach. Third Palace Period.

112

View of the foundations of Stoa P, Late Minoan III, Tylissos, Third Palace Period.



Several Minoan building techniques which continue into this period can be observed most clearly at Tyllissos. The use of a saw-cut threshold block can be observed in a building constructed above Tyllissos House C where it lies in situ above corridor B. Among the other Postpalatial remains at Tyllissos is a stoa that continues the Minoan building practice of setting column bases into the stylobate. This stoa takes the form of a rectangular structure fronting on to a court in a manner similar to the Neopalatial stoa at Haghia Triadha [69]. All that remains are the rubble wall foundations, a small section of the stylobate, and parts of two column bases set into it [1121.12

Burial practices

The monumentalized Grave Circle A at Mycenae

Two views of the Grave Circle A section of the citadel at Mycenae, and a reconstruction of the area at the bottom, are shown in 93 and 113. Grave Circle A was the second of two large cemeteries (possibly of dynastic significance) at Mycenae outside and to the west of the city walls. Some time after its original construction, this grave circle was surrounded by a newly extended citadel wall and thus brought into the citadel proper. It was monumentalized as shown in the drawing. The two grave circles (A and B) were a specialized setting-off of two elite groups from the rest of the population. The stelai discussed in Chapter 4 were removed; the ground level was raised several metres to form a new platform that could be accessed directly from the ascending main road of the town; a roughly circular (and hollow) parapet of limestone slabs was erected, with a formal entrance in the northeast corner, next to the road; and the stelai were re-erected over the general position of the original (and now much more deeply buried) graves, all orientated westwards.

It seems likely that this monumentalizing of a set of graves, involving the creation of a round gathering or commemorating place (a *choros*, to use a later Greek term), the preserving (and possibly the renewal) of ancestral tombstones, and the incorporation of the old cemetery into the protective fabric of the citadel itself, no easy feat, reflected a great increase in and centralization of power by the Mycenae elite.

The Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae

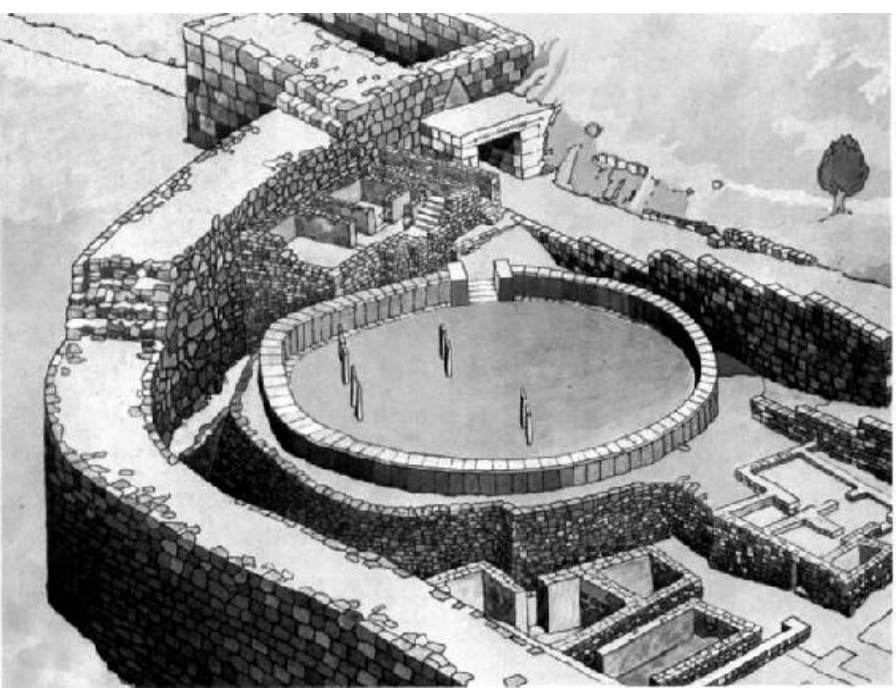
Even more spectacular is the appearance, beginning by the Late Bronze Age II Period, of the great beehive or tholos tombs, first in other parts of western and central Greece, and then at Mycenae itself, where they become monumental symbols of unprecedented wealth and power. They constitute the most prominent constructions of the period when Mycenaean contacts and connections (through trade, piracy, and settlement) begin to stretch from Palestine to Sicily and beyond. The most famous and most finely designed and finely built of the nine tholos tombs constructed to the west of the grave circles and citadel of Mycenae is the so-called Treasury of Atreus.

Consisting of a great circular chamber cut into a hillside, some 15 m in both diameter and height and entered by a corridor (*dromos*) about

36 m long, the tomb was roofed over with a continuous frame of finely cut ashlar block rings, decreasing in size up to a central round capstone. The structure was covered with earth, and the resulting conical hill fringed with stones. Burial was in a side-chamber, beneath the ground; nothing remains of whatever treasure may have accompanied the deceased, as these tombs have been plundered repeatedly since antiquity. The two illustrations show the present state of the entrance facade at the tholos end of the dromos [1141, and a reconstructed drawing of its original sculpted facade [1151; two columns of porphyry, a stone native to Egypt, finely carved with chevrons and spirals, and above the door a facade of red and green bands of running spirals and lozenges between two smaller carved pillars. Behind the carved facade is the relieving triangle over the lintel (itself a single block of stone estimated to weigh more than 100,000 kg (100 tons)). The relieving triangle of the great Lion Gate of the Mycenae citadel (see p.189 and 125), filled with a sculpted plaque of antithetic animals, appears not to have been duplicated in this tomb.

113

Reconstruction of Grave Circle A, Mycenae, remodelled in the form shown in the Late Helladic III Period.
Drawing by George Dexter and Piet de Jong. The six shaft graves date from the late Middle Helladic Period, when this part of the royal cemetery was still outside the citadel wall.



The Treasury of Atreus and its companion beehive tombs are among the most monumental structures of Bronze Age Greece. It is evident that these were the tombs of a ruling class, and most likely of families in primary control of the power and resources of entire city states or kingdoms.

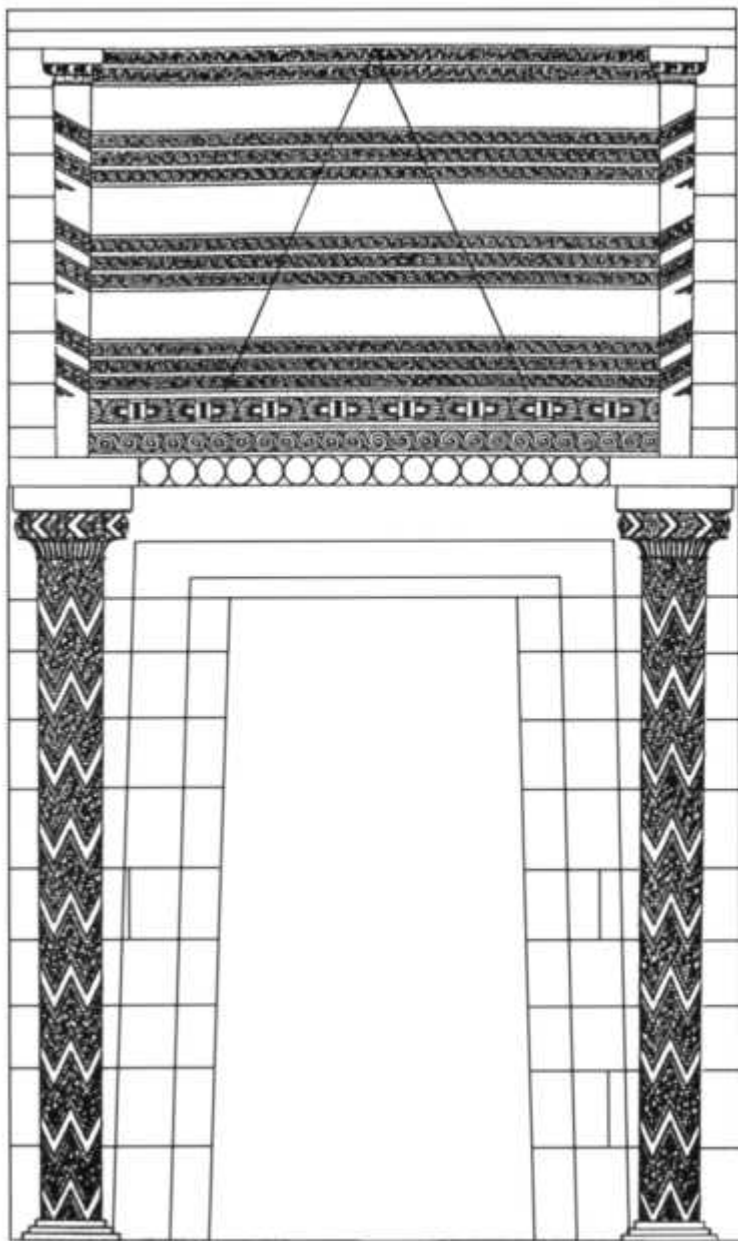


114

View of the so-called 'Treasury of Atreus' tholos tomb, Mycenae, Late Helladic III. This tomb, the most famous and finely designed of some nine such tholoi at Mycenae, consisted of a great beehive-shaped chamber cut into a hillside, some 15 m in both diameter and height and entered by a corridor or dromos about 36 m long. The tomb was built entirely of finely cut limestone blocks, the whole then covered with earth to form a great conical mound.

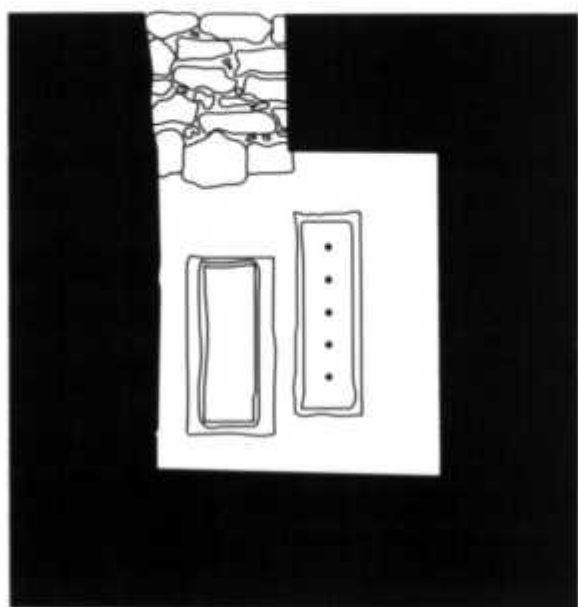
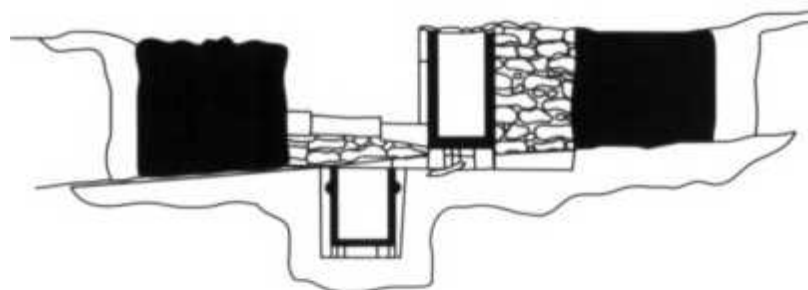
115

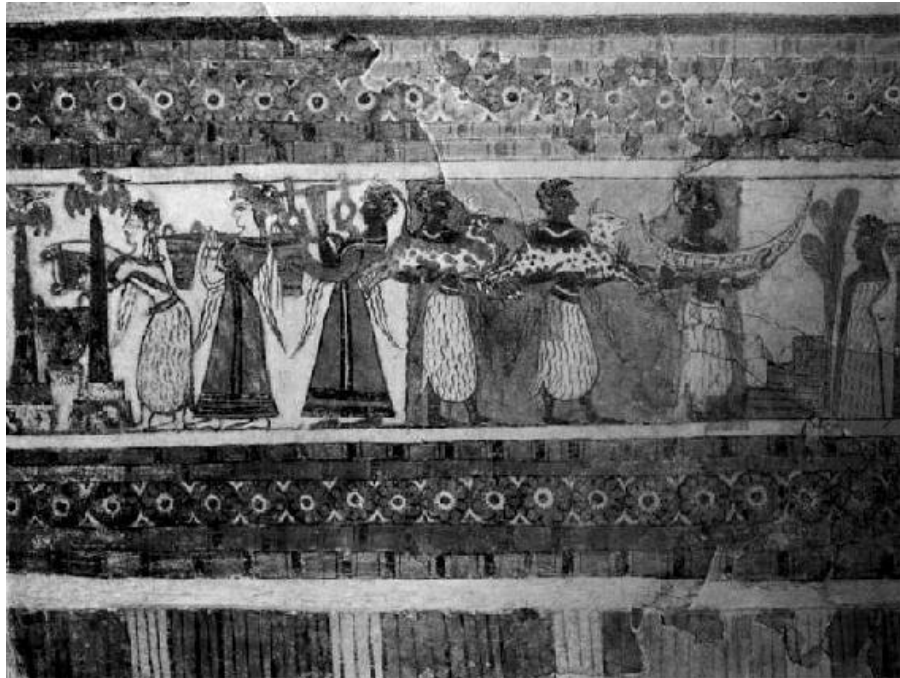
Reconstructed drawing of the facade of the Treasury of Atreus, Mycenae. Behind the carved facade is the relieving triangle over the lintel. In contrast to the sculpted relieving triangle of the citadel's Lion Gate (see 125), this was decorated in a manner to conceal its presence.



116

Plan and section of the chamber tomb at Hagia Triada in which was found the painted sarcophagus of 117.





117

Haghia Triad ha sarcophagus, Third Palace Period, painted limestone, long side panel A. The panel is thought by some to depict burial ceremonies, including the giving of offerings to the deceased, who may be the individual at the far right, in front of a tomb or shrine. To the left are two women pouring liquid offerings into a bucket or rhyton between two large double axes, followed by harpist.

The Haghia Triadha sarcophagus

Two sides of a painted sarcophagus found nearly a century ago near Haghia Triadha and its location are shown in 116, 117, 118. The painted scenes on the sarcophagus have fuelled an extraordinary amount of discussion and debate about the nature of Minoan religion. Found buried underground in a finely built chamber tomb [1161], the sarcophagus originally held the body of a deceased person of some social status, its painted sides depicting what some have taken to be the burial ceremonies themselves, including celebrations and offerings to the deceased.

The scenes, objects, and motifs depicted are familiar in Minoan painting and other representations on gems and relief work. The long side panel is divided into three zones marked off by different background colours [117]; to the left is an altar made up of a large

bucket or rhyton between two large standing double axes, into which are being poured liquid offerings by two women in familiar costume with long, snaky locks of hair. The sacrificial liquid is visible draining through the bottom of the bucket, which suggests one way in which Minoan rhyta may have functioned. To their back is a dark-complexioned lyre player of indeterminate gender, something well attested in the Near East by this time.



118

Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, long side panel B, Third Palace Period. Partly destroyed, the remainder shows women and a flautist approaching an altar and a shrine with 'horns of consecration' on its roof.

In the centre are three men carrying what may have been models of sacrificial animals, and a model of a boat, possibly for deposit in the tomb itself (see the plan in 1 16)-a practice common in contemporary Egypt. They are approaching a standing individual, most likely the

deceased, standing before the facade of a shrine or possibly a tomb. In front of him is a tree, adjacent to a stepped platform or altar.

The other long panel has been partly destroyed on the left; the remainder depicts women and a flute player approaching an altar and a shrine with horns of consecration on its roof [1181. There is a tree behind the shrine, and one of the women is placing her hands on the altar; behind and above her are richly decorated pots. To her rear is what seems to be a real bull trussed for sacrifice, partly covering a male flute player; a second woman with a richly decorated headdress is laying her hands on the sacrificial table. There appear to have been three figures behind her, also walking from left to right; only their feet remain.

On one of the ends is a winged griffin drawing a chariot. A great deal has been read into these scenes over the past century regarding Minoan religion and possible Minoan or Aegean beliefs in an afterlife or an underworld or a world of the supernatural.²³ Suffice it to say that what is depicted here is evidently a celebration (and perpetual reenactment through permanent representation) of funerary ritual, burial, and the offerings in the deceased's honour. The painter(s) chose what would have been a well-known and clearly recognizable series of vignettes (pouring offerings, carrying gifts, sacrificing animals, marching and playing music, on behalf of the figure, statue, or image of the deceased) organized into episodic segments marked both by different characters and actions, and by distinctively coloured backgrounds, strung together in a compact narrative sequence.

It is possible that the first panel alludes to ceremonies marking the burial itself, with the second referring to ceremonies in commemoration of the deceased, though there are other possibilities. The ends of the sarcophagus may have denoted the realm of the supernatural or fantastic, in which case they served to frame the ceremonies in and by supernatural powers, in a manner reminiscent of the flanking deities and heraldic animals both in the Knossos Throne Room or Pylos main hall, and in the crocus-gathering scene from the girls' puberty shrine in Xeste 3 at Akrotiri on Thera.

In any case, the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus is another fine illustration of Minoan narrative frieze painting, of a type that, as we have seen, vividly and poignantly portrays the crisply synopsisized characteristics of a story or social ceremony, and with which-if the fragmentary evidence we have is indicative-the Minoans literally and liberally covered the spaces of their lives.

Late Minoan III. A clay model of an offering scene, from Kamilari. Two individuals bring offerings to altar tables placed before four larger seated persons, possibly the deceased or divinities. Three windows are shown at the rear, and the shrine or tomb is fronted by two now missing columns.



The well-known clay model from Kamilariz' [119] contains a variation on the theme presented on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus, that is, honouring the dead. The model shows four persons of indeterminate gender seated on low seats placed against the wall of a small rectangular room. There are cylindrical tables resembling stools in front of several of them. Small objects sit on at least one of the tables. Two smaller figures who appear to be holding offerings approach the larger, seated figures. The model is generally regarded as being associated with some sort of ceremony connected with the dead, perhaps making offerings to the dead, the dead making offerings to deities, or some other variation. It was found in the Prepalatial tholos tomb discussed above (see Chapter 2 (31)) which was reused in the Third Palace Period.

Other dramatic scenes of mourning are depicted on the celebrated larnakes (painted clay chests used to inter the deceased) from Tanagra in Boeotia, east of Thebes. Here, the Cretan practice of burying the deceased in clay coffins was combined with the mainland practice of interring the dead in rectangular chamber tombs cut into soft rock and

reached by a dromos or entrance passage. The one pictured here [1201 is painted with scenes connected with funerary rites. Though abstract, they are no less poignant than the Hagia Triadha sarcophagus in conveying the emotions connected with the loss of a friend or loved one. It depicts mourning with women tearing at their hair, funeral games in the form of the hunt and chariot races, and the laying out of the dead. Although it dates from the fifteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE, it anticipates similar subject matter in the much later Geometric Period.

120

Mycenaean clay larnaxor sarcophagus from Tanagra (Thebes), Late Helladic III A,2-Late Helladic III B. 1, c. fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BCE. The upper register depicts lamenting women tearing at their hair, the lower a scene with antithetic chariots and standing men.



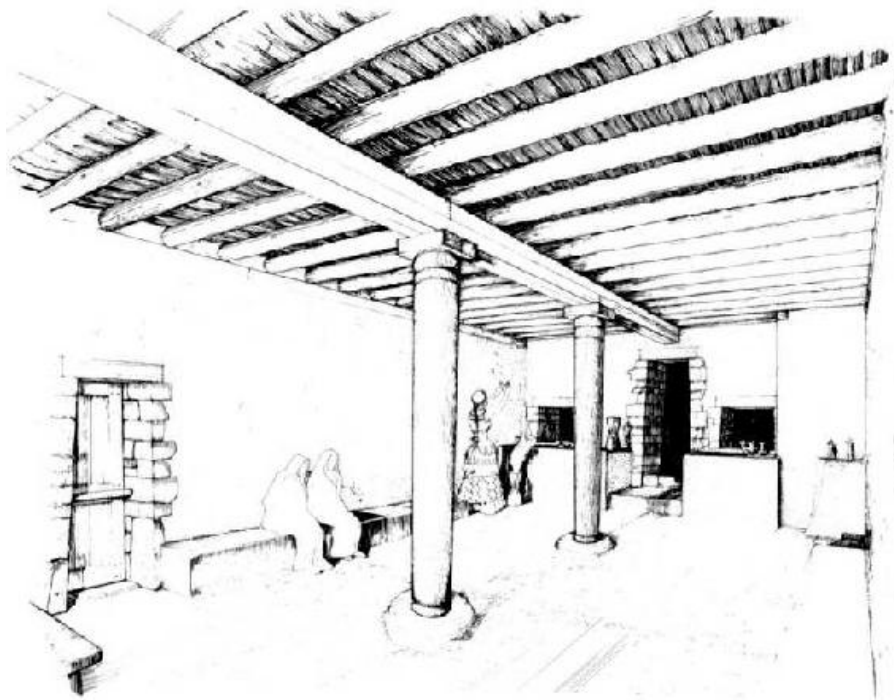
The Mycenaean shrine at Phylakopi

It is clear from the Linear B tablets that a number of deities were worshipped during the Third Palace Period. Furthermore, the archaeological evidence indicates that there were localized practices peculiar to individual sites. The Mycenaean sanctuary at Phylakopi on the island of Melos, however, represents a well-documented example of religious architecture, cult paraphernalia, and ritual during this time.^{z'}

Religious practice at Phylakopi was a dynamic process, with the sanctuary [1211 undergoing a series of changes over time. It began as a rectangular hall with two smaller, rear chambers of unequal size along the west wall. Small benches or platforms bordered either side of the doorway leading to the rear chambers. These platforms served as places for the display of cult offerings dedicated to a deity or deities. As the sanctuary was developed further, it came to include another shrine located diagonally and to the east of this first, west shrine. The east shrine consisted of a platform in the northeast corner of a narrow, rectangular room. A court with a stone baetyl reinforcing the sacred character of the area was located between the two shrines.

121

Reconstruction drawing of the west shrine in use during Phase Ib, Phylakopi, Melos, Third Palace Period. The several platforms held figurines: females on the southwest bench, in a rear niche, and in a rear chamber; males and chariot groups on the northwest bench.



122

The 'Lady of Phylakopi' statuette, west shrine, Phylakopi, Melos. This wheel-made, painted clay figure was placed in the shrine's rear inner chamber. The offerings in the reconstruction in 121 are believed to have been dedicated to this deity.



The placement of objects in the west shrine tended to be segregated by gender, with female figurines placed on the southwest bench; larger female figures and bovine figures placed in a niche and in the small back room on the southwest; and male figures, chariot groups, and other animals confined to the northwest bench. These offerings have been interpreted as dedications to a larger and more elaborate, clay wheel-made figure known as the Lady of Phylakopi 11221. The Lady was placed in the smaller rear chamber that has been interpreted as a holy of holies.

The Lady is formed out of a pipe-shaped cylinder of buff clay that swells at the top to subtly indicate her chest. The separately sculpted arms were attached to the side of the chest and were probably raised.

The wheel-made head has separately modelled features and was attached to a slender cylindrical neck. The jutting chin gives her a certain distinction and is accentuated with red paint that might indicate tattooing. Her long slender nose and upper lip are similarly painted. Her wide, almond-shaped eyes framed with delicate lashes which gaze upward are topped by curved brows. Wavy bands known as rock patterns begin near the hem of her skirt and are repeated on her dress, chest, neck and even form the hair framing her forehead. These rock patterns alternate with concentric bands of both horizontal and vertical zigzags on her dress. Stylistically, the Lady seems to indicate a Mycenaean manufacture and a date corresponding to the early part of the Third Palace Period, between the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries. Her veneration might be seen as directed at perpetuating the prosperity of the settlement. Additionally, it may represent a continuation of cult activity from the Second Palace Period that focused on a pillar crypt in Minoan Crete.

The isolated shrine to the east was primarily used for depositing animal figurines, including bulls and chariot groups. The purpose of this shrine is less clear. The offering of animals and chariots would seem to indicate that offerings were being made to ensure success or give thanks for success in the male-oriented domain of hunting, gaming, or taming of the wild. The use of the bench as a place to leave offerings at Phylakopi may have its origins in Minoan culture where bench shrines were a common occurrence. Some of the bull figures at Phylakopi had cups on their backs indicating that they functioned as cult vessels. Similarly the use of cultic vessels in the form of bulls was common on Crete as well as in the Near East.

The circuit walls at Mycenae and Tiryns

When we think of the fortified city walls of Mycenae and Tiryns, a warlike image of the Mycenaean peoples of mainland Greece sometimes comes to mind [123]. This is often contrasted with a peace-loving image of the Minoans where such highly visible fortifications are seemingly lacking. As we discussed in Chapter 4, the intricate layout of Minoan buildings may have served as internal defence mechanisms, indicating some concern for security on the part of the Minoans. Additionally, the residues of the past tend to leave us with impressions where the timeframes involved become minimized or forgotten.

123

The so-called 'Warrior' krater, Mycenae—a virtual icon of Mycenaean militarism to modern archaeologists, contrasting mainlanders with supposedly more civilized and peace-loving Minoans. Much of the vase shows a line of helmeted, marching soldiers with spears and shields; on the handle area are animals and a female figure.



The time between the construction of the first Minoan palaces on Crete and the destruction of the Mycenaean citadels on the mainland spans some 800 years. It is only towards the end of this Boo-year period, and long after the Minoan palaces have been destroyed, that the Mycenaeans fortify their cities. This late and sudden activity implies a reaction to a different set of social and political circumstances from those confronting the Minoans several hundred years earlier. Although it is far from clear what events precipitated this reaction by the different Mycenaean city states, the fortifications were ultimately unable to prevent the destruction of the Mycenaean citadels towards the end of the Bronze Age.

The drive to fortify sites like Mycenae and Tiryns occurred progressively and in stages rather than suddenly. Archaeologists have been able to determine these stages through a study of the decorated pottery sherds found in the foundations beneath the walls. The fortification of Mycenae began around 1340 BCE, some 25 years after the citadel of Tiryns was fortified. The fortification of Mycenae consisted of three construction phases which progressively increased the extent of the area under protection [1241.26

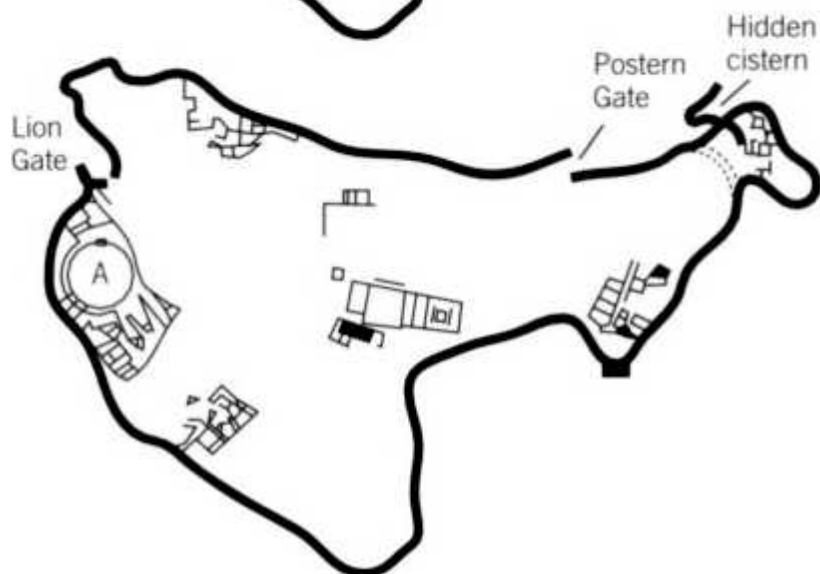
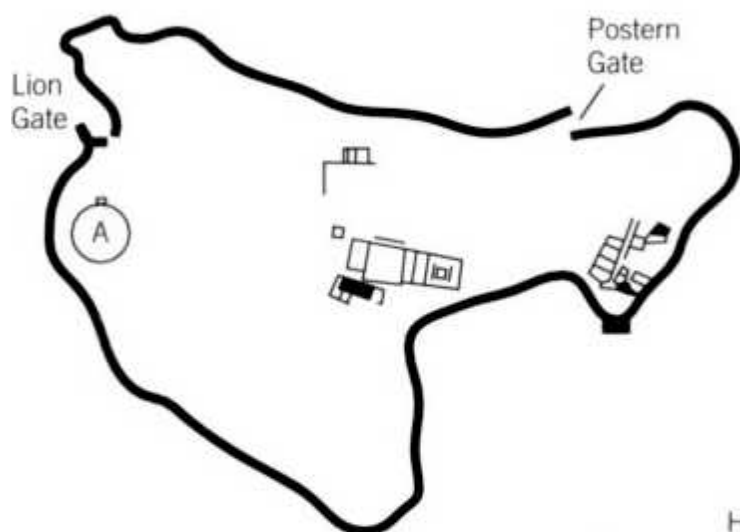
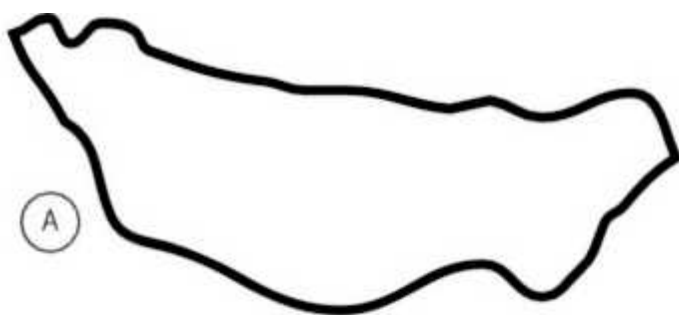
This first wall pre-dates the construction of the Lion Gate and the Great Ramp leading up the citadel towards the palace. It included a postern (rear) gate and a main entrance formed by an overlapping break in the wall that was located behind and to the east of Grave Circle A. The citadel was nearly doubled in size some go years later, around 1250 BCE. It was at this time that the famous Lion Gate was constructed and the west wall was extended to enclose Grave Circle A and a series of buildings connected with religious practices. These changes occurred before the refurbishing of Grave Circle A. At this time, a monumental passageway leading up the citadel and known as the Great Ramp was constructed over the broken slabs of Grave Circle A and an earlier ramp of hard-packed earth and pebbles. A new postern gate to the north and a tower on the southeast were built a short time later. Although the postern gate is undecorated, its design incorporates the same features of the Lion Gate on a smaller scale, as discussed below.

The final changes occur towards the end of the Third Palace Period, that is, around 1200 BCE. At this time the fortifications are extended on the northeast in order to protect access to a secret underground cistern. The cistern could be reached by a sometimes treacherous zigzag underground staircase leading to a rectangular shaft fed by an aqueduct which led from a nearby spring. The design of the staircase shows a certain sophistication in employing the corbelled arch (see

below). It was coated with plaster, allowing for the water level to rise into the lower passage. Sally-ports placed nearby on the north and south would have allowed authorized individuals to exit and enter the citadel without attracting a lot of attention and they could have been easily blocked with a mound of earth to keep enemies at bay. Similar stages in construction took place at the citadel at Tiryns. Such measures are not necessarily the actions of a warlike people. Rather, they indicate that the Mycenaeans were reacting to social and political circumstances that were becoming increasingly tense. The provision of a secured water source should have rendered the citadel impregnable, yet all of the Mycenaean citadels were violently destroyed a short time later. Some of the possible reasons behind this destruction will be touched on in the concluding chapter.

124

Plans of three stages in the evolution of the circuit walls of the citadel of Mycenae, midfourteenth to mid-thirteenth century scE. Grave Circle A, originally outside the walls, was encircled by the new extension and the direction of entry shifted from the south to the north. The new circuit added about 40 per cent to the area of the citadel.





125

The so-called 'Lion Gate' from the exterior, Mycenae, c. 1250 BCE. This monumental limestone relief, with two antithetic animals with their front legs resting on two Minoan-style altars flanking a central column, masks the relieving triangle over the lintel of the gate. The animals were most likely lions; the overall design is known as early as the fifteenth century BCE on Crete, but in miniature form on seals or ivory carvings. See 126.

In its final form, the city wall at Mycenae enclosed some 30,000 sq. m with walls averaging 7-7.5 m in thickness and reaching a maximum preserved height of 8 m. The construction technique for these walls is termed Cyclopean, reflecting a later Greek belief that the massive limestone blocks which form most of the wall could only be the work of the Cyclops. It should be noted that this term is not mentioned in Homer or in earlier Mycenaean texts. Modern scholarship would term this technique dry-wall with massive rubble blocks.

There is an occasional use of irregularly shaped stones, termed polygonal, while saw-cut, hammer-dressed blocks, termed ashlar, are used for highly visible sections of the wall including the Lion Gate, North Gate, and Southeast Tower. The appearance of the wall and gates is deliberately monumental. While the bulk of the wall is constructed of limestone, these more formal areas are constructed of conglomerate, a stone consisting of naturally cemented together pebbles, cobblestones, and other sediments, giving the worked blocks

a pleasing, variegated appearance. Several storerooms built into the interior of the north wall have been compared by some scholars to the galleries built into the walls at nearby Tiryns. However, these rooms lack the architectural refinements of the Tiryns galleries with their corbel vaulting.

The famous Lion Gate at Mycenae dates to the second extension of the citadel around 1250 BCE [1251. This later addition is represented by the gate, a projecting bastion of conglomerate on the west, and a decorative ashlar face on the already existing east wall. The gate embodies functions that are simultaneously utilitarian and symbolic. The massive bastion on the west projects forward into the space of a would-be attacker leaving his unshielded right side open to assault from defenders manning the bastion. The bastion also serves to narrow the passageway. The effect would have been to spread out an attacking force and further increase its vulnerability. A small chamber built into the rock within the gate on the east side has been interpreted as a guard room. Similar rooms are found at other sites, both Mycenaean and Minoan.

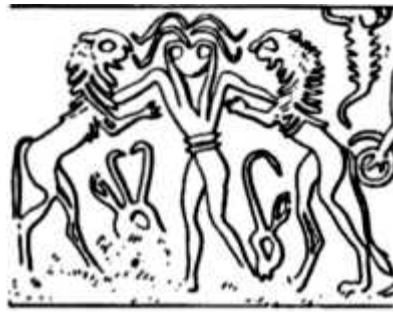
The gate is formed by four massive conglomerate blocks that compose its side-posts, lintel, and threshold. Ruts in the threshold indicate that wheeled vehicles were driven into the citadel. The construction of the wall above the gateway employs the construction technique known as corbelling, in which each successive layer of blocks slightly overlaps the previous layer as they go upward so that they form a pointed arch above the lintel block. The empty space created by this arch is known as a relieving triangle because it relieves downward pressure on the lintel block and prevents it from breaking in the middle.

The Lion Gate is unique for containing the only surviving example of a sculpted panel used to fill a relieving triangle. The panel consists of a relatively thin slab of grey limestone bearing a carved decorative relief. The presence of the triangle suggests to some that the original height of the wall was considerable. The relief depicts antithetic zoomorphs rampant with front legs resting on two incurved altars flanking a central column crowned by the architrave of an entablature. The heads of the animals were gardant, or facing outward, as indicated by dowel-holes for attaching them to the bodies. Both the altars and the column, which tapers downward and is crowned with a bulbous capital topped by an architrave depicting the ends of cross-beams, are Minoan in style.

Despite the fact that the top of the entablature is damaged, a

rectangular mortise or hole on the undamaged side may indicate that a decorative element once crowned the entire arrangement. Horns of consecration and birds are the most frequently suggested elements. Both are Minoan in origin. Horns are frequently represented in Mycenaean culture while a bird on each side would balance the arrangement of the lions and the altars. Birds are often associated with representations of Minoan goddess figurines while horns have occurred in architectural settings throughout the Aegean and the ancient Near East.

The origin of the relief, its reconstruction, and its meaning are fraught with controversy. Its uniqueness on the mainland has indicated to some that the relief was brought from elsewhere and recarved to fit it into the relieving triangle. Others have speculated that it was painted, although no evidence exists for this. Since the heads were attached separately, many have believed that a different material was used, with a black stone known as steatite suggested most frequently. The vast majority of scholars believe that the animals represented are lions, although an increasing number prefer lionesses, citing the interpretation of lions as indicative of a sexist bias. Although the famous ancient traveller Pausanias briefly mentions lions, some are willing to dismiss this, suggesting that he did not notice the gate closely, or that the heads were already broken by the time he visited.²¹



126a and b

Seal representations of antithetic animals. These two illustrations attest to the Bronze Age tradition of powerful animals flanking a revered object, person or deity. Illustration 126a represents a Mesopotamian hero as a 'Master' of animals; 126b represents an Aegean 'Mistress' of animals.

A small minority of scholars would like to see the heads of griffins placed on the leonine bodies, based on the frequent representations of griffins in Minoan and Mycenaean art. The most persuasive proponent of this idea believes that wooden heads plated with metal such as bronze would reinforce the notion of the griffin as a composite animal through the use of composite materials.^{zs}

For the time being, there is no external and objective basis for claiming that any one theory or interpretation, well argued and coherent internally and fitting to the data, is preferable to another theory, equally well argued but based on different assumptions.

At the very least we can see this antithetic sculptural group as leonine. However, in turning to the meaning of this relief we are confronted with at least two possibilities. Guardian animals placed at

gateways have been traditionally regarded as apotropaic by many, signifying protection, strength, and stability. They serve this function at contemporary Hittite sites in Anatolia as well as in later contexts of the Assyrian and Persian empires of the Near East. The heavy style and monumentality of the leonine creatures has been compared to the lion sculptures of the Hittites.^w

The central column with its entablature has been interpreted as representing a structure, possibly the palace or city and its king, a religious building, or the deity of the house. Many other prominent scholars believe that the central column represents an aniconic deity;⁰ This interpretation fits within a long Bronze Age tradition attested in both the Aegean and the Near East of powerful animals flanking revered objects [1261. If the animals were supernatural, this would certainly place the column in the realm of the supernatural. The characterization of the foliate symbol, the pillar, and the column as sacred in character is well defined in Aegean art by virtue of their association with other sacred symbols. These symbols include altars, offering tables, horns of consecration, and the double axe. In many Aegean examples, the pillar provides a substitute for the tree as the focus of the antithetical group. The tree might be conceptualized as symbolizing the female or as more broadly symbolic of a fruitful harvest. Here, the column might be seen as an architectural representation or even a domestication of the tree as symbol by bringing it within the purview of the palace.

What about the two altars? Some see them as symbolizing the worship of two deities while others interpret them as symbolizing the unification of two kingdoms. Where did the Mycenaeans get the idea for the subject of the gate? From the Minoans, the Hittites, or another Near Eastern people? And, did borrowing the image from a particular source necessarily imply that the meaning attached by one group would be the meaning attached to it by the peoples of Mycenae and the visitors to Mycenae? If we choose to focus our attention on the significance of the antithetical group and the effect of the entablature we should be aware of the fact that the antithetical group can be inserted into a 2,000-year history of meaning that spans the Bronze Age Mediterranean in its entirety. The significance of the antithetical group would have been readily understandable to an individual living in the Mediterranean Bronze Age whether Mycenaean, Minoan, Syrian, Hittite, or Egyptian. Does the presence of the entablature complicate that meaning by combining or conflating religious significance with secular authority?

In considering the special meaning of the gate to the people of

Mycenae, it is perhaps no accident that the construction of the Lion Gate corresponds to the enlargement of the city wall to purposely incorporate Grave Circle A (see 113). The incorporation of Grave Circle A within the fortification wall at Mycenae corresponds to its renewal and refurbishing at a time when Grave Circle B passed from communal memory and was consigned to oblivion.

The round parapet of the Middle Bronze Age was replaced with a double wall of vertical limestone slabs that is visible today with an entrance constructed on the north. The stelai which marked the graves were re-erected, although not in their original place. Retaining walls were also added to help maintain the integrity of the monument. Although the date and arrangement of this renewal have recently been called into question, the fact that it was carried out still indicates a concern with ancestor worship." Furthermore, enclosing the Grave Circle within the wall of the city indicates the desire of the ruling elite to visually strengthen their connection to an ancestral line.

It has recently been suggested that these developments signal the convergence of ideology and political centralization so that the emphasis placed on Grave Circle A was part of the final process in consolidating power in the hands of a single ruling elite." Within this context, the Lion Gate sends a message that might be read as deliberately ambiguous as well as multivalent. The symbolism of the palace embodied in the entablature on the gate is combined with the column. In this way the rulers of Mycenae appropriate a symbol traditionally identified with the divine in the Bronze Age iconographic vocabulary, namely the column as an aniconic representation of the divine. In bringing the column within the domain of the palace, the ruler further legitimates himself.



Conclusion: Disruptions, (Dis)Continuities, and the Bronze Age Legacy

6

The fortification of many of the Mycenaean cities in the thirteenth century BCE leaves us with the questions: What were the events that transpired to usher in the end of the Bronze Age? What was the effect of these upheavals and social transformations on art and society? Furthermore, what was the artistic, material, religious, and technological legacy of the Aegean peoples for later Greece and the Near East?

After a century of archaeological scrutiny of the Minoan, Mycenaean, and Cycladic material records, there is a substantial body of historical speculation on these matters. In addition, there are many examples of artefacts which appear to foreshadow practices familiar in later Greek social and religious life. However, only a few attempts to track these trajectories in a systematic way have been successful. We would begin such an attempt by using our concluding chapter to introduce the reader to the following issues: the eastward migration of an Aegean tradition; the development of an 'international style' in the ancient Mediterranean; the disruptions caused by various groups of displaced individuals collectively known as the 'Sea Peoples'; and a look at some of the Aegean traditions that were present after the destruction of the palaces, as well as a glimpse at their continuation into the early Iron Age.

The eastward migration of Aegean traditions

During the period of the Mycenaean build-up of their defensive capabilities, a new phase of internationalism, trade, and artistic endeavour was under way. This spirit of internationalism was not entirely new, but was built upon a long existing tradition of foreign influences and cultural exchanges.

Contacts abroad were well established in the Minoan or Second Palace Period, as seen in this fragment of a bull leaper [1271 in the

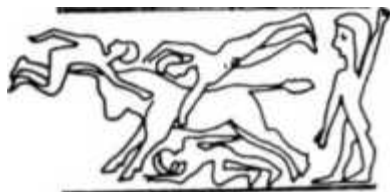
Minoan style from the Hyksos capital of Avaris in the Nile Delta. The fragment is part of a larger scene that has plausibly been reconstructed as an acrobat somersaulting over the back of a bull comparable to the so-called Taureador fresco from Mycenaean Knossos (107). However, the Avaris frescoes are earlier, dating to the Second Palace Period. This fragment is just one of many representations from Avaris painted in the Minoan style. The suggested reasons for this preference for Minoan fresco paintings range from speculation about a dynastic marriage to a Minoan princess to more reasoned inferences regarding elite patronage of itinerant Minoan craftspersons. The fragments from Avaris join a growing list of Near Eastern sites where Minoan-style fresco paintings have been discovered. Others include Alalakh, Kabri, and Qatna.

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Detail of 132

128

Detailed drawing of seal impression depicting bull sports, Aleppo, Northern Syria, c. seventeenth century ace.



Many, but not all, scholars are content to see the fragments from Avaris as the product of Minoan workmanship, despite the obvious similarities in the representations of the Avaris bull leapers to Minoan ones with their 'wasp' waists, kilts, and long, snaky locks of hair. Representations of bull leaping, however, were not restricted to the Aegean as once believed, as shown by the depiction of bull-leaping scenes on Near Eastern cylinder seals from northern Syria 11281.' These Syrian scenes are roughly similar to Minoan ones, but completely omit architectural elements while mythical elements such as deities are sometimes indicated. Although these Syrian representations are independent creations, their tendency towards artistic as opposed to realistic treatment resembles Minoan scenes. The long history of bull contests in the Near East and the fact that the Syrian scenes seem to antedate the Minoan ones have led one scholar, Dominique Collon, to postulate a Syrian origin for Minoan bull

leaping.

127

Fresco fragment of a bull leaper from Tell el-Dab'a, Egypt, c. seventeenth century BCE. The Minoan-style fresco fragments found at this Nile Delta town attest to interconnections between the Aegean and Egypt. This fragment is believed to be part of a larger scene of an acrobat somersaulting over the back of a bull. Compare this with the 'Taureador' fresco from Mycenaen Knossos (107).

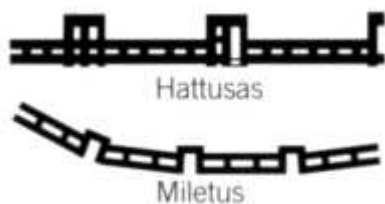


Mycenaeans and Hittites at Miletus/Milawatta

The settled presence of Aegean peoples in the Near East dates from the First Palace Period. This is first attested by a wide range of Minoan pottery, followed, after a violent destruction, by the presence of Mycenaean pottery in Miletus [1291, ancient Milawatta. The high quality of this Mycenaean pottery initially led many Aegean scholars to believe that it was exported to Miletus from the region known as the Argolid in mainland Greece. Recent scientific studies of the mineral content of the pottery, however, have shown that it was locally made in Miletus. Such studies would tend to reinforce the belief held by some that these Mycenaeans of Miletus are the people referred to as the men of Ahhiyawa in the cuneiform texts of the Hittite peoples who ruled Anatolia in the Late Bronze Age.

130

Comparative plans of city walls at the Hittite city of Hattusas, central Anatolia, and at Miletus, western Anatolia, thirteenth century BCE, the latter showing Hittite casemate design.



The annals of the Hittite King Mursilis II record a destruction of Milawatta after the King of Ahhiyawa and the Land of Milawatta joined forces against him with another enemy near the end of the fourteenth century BCF. In the thirteenth century BCE, a wall was constructed around Miletus using the casemate technique popular among the Hittites 11301. The construction of a wall built in the Hittite style and the continued presence of Mycenaean pottery indicates a coexistence of different cultural traditions, although a Hittite document known as the Tawagalawas letter refers to Milawatta as non-Hittite. This letter also accuses the King of Milawatta of harbouring a renegade known as Pijamaradus who may have conducted raids on Lesbos and Wilusa (Troy). More importantly, the date of the wall at Miletus seems to correspond to the fortification of Mycenaean sites on the Greek mainland. Could both areas have been reacting to the same perceived threat?

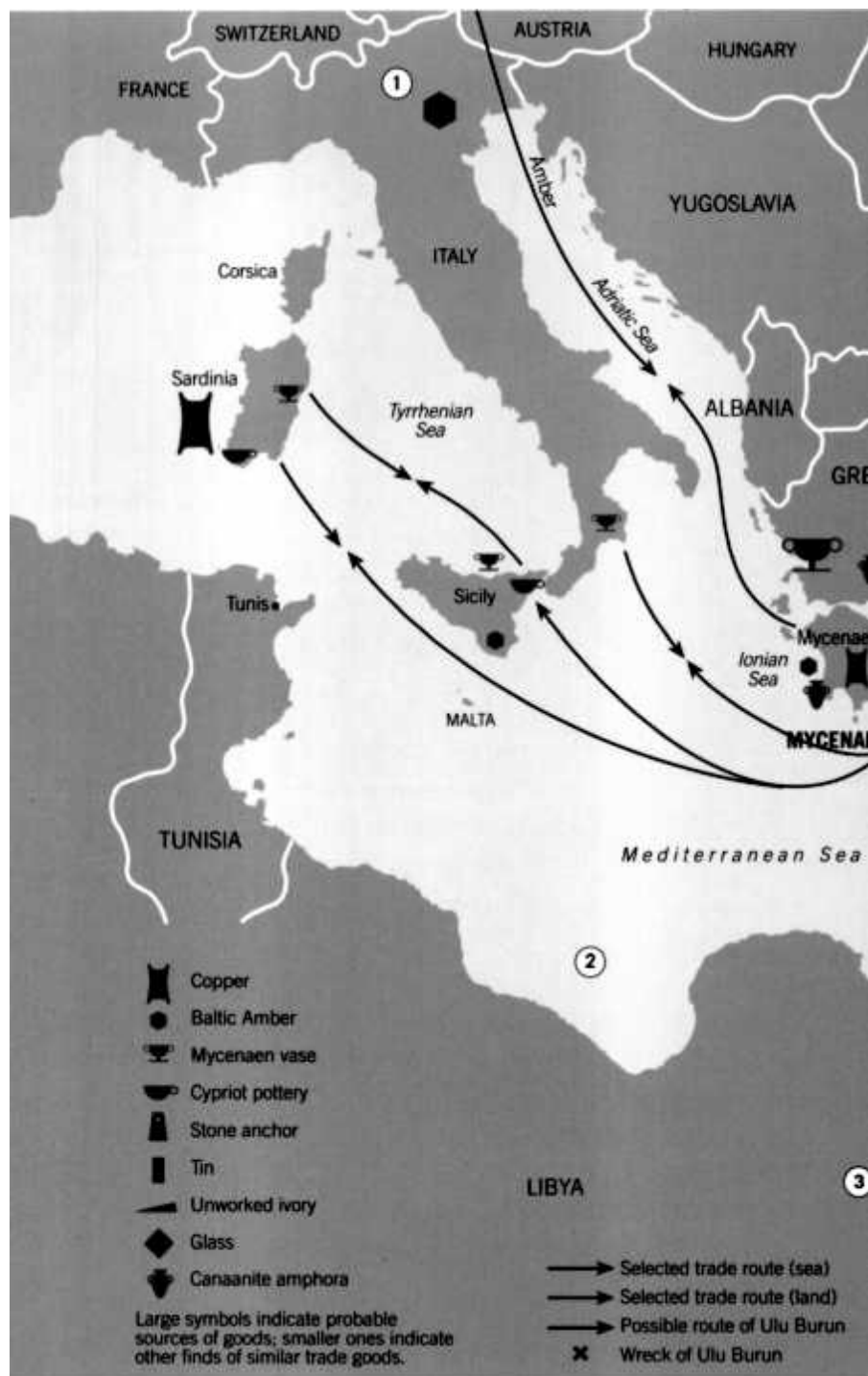
129a and b

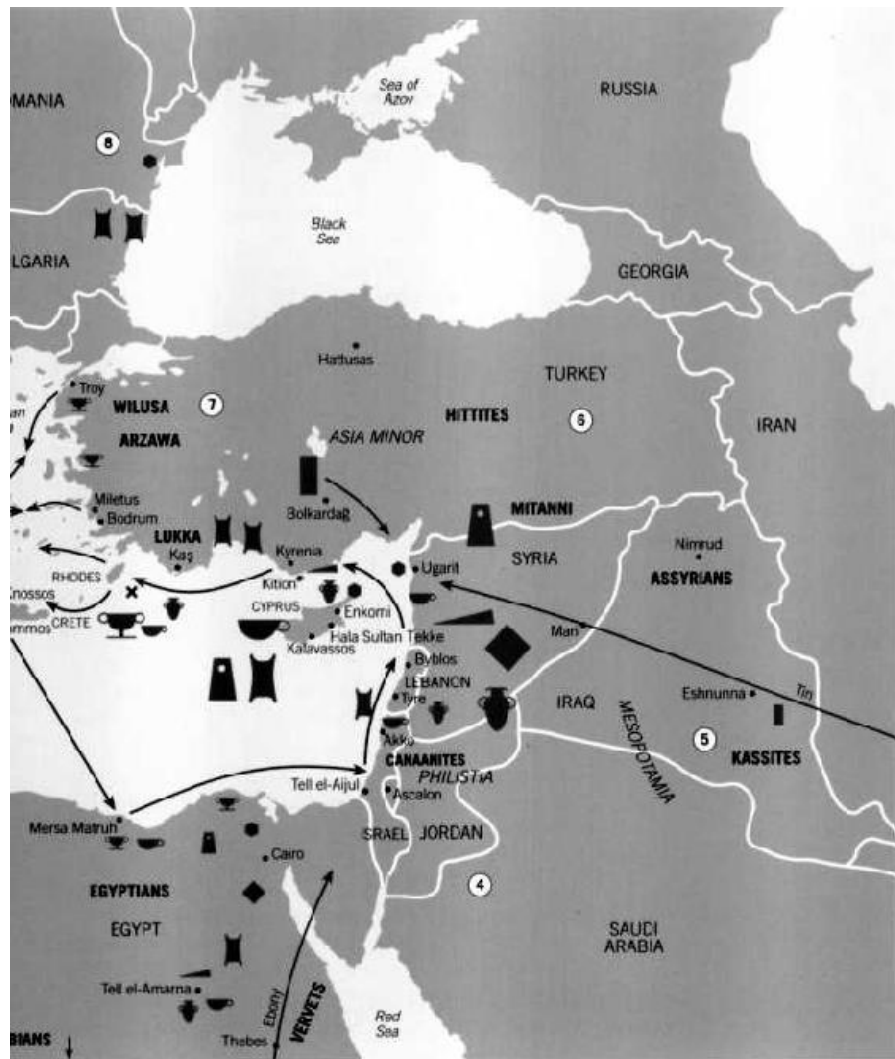
Mycenaean-style pottery locally made at Miletus, west coast of Anatolia.



Map 4

The ancient Mediterranean
of the Late Bronze Age





The international style

Trade routes between the Aegean peoples and their Near Eastern neighbours were well established by the end of the Bronze Age [see Map 41. Seafarers must have taken a circular route, following the ancient coastlines as much as possible for safety and making many stops to exchange one precious commodity for another. A wreck excavated at Ulu Burun [1311 off the south coast of Turkey by a team led by George Bass revealed a fourteenth-century BCE Phoenician trading ship that tells such a story.' It contained goods from around the Mediterranean including an Egyptian scarab, copper ingots, Mycenaean [1321 and Canaanite pottery, a wax writing tablet for keeping inventories, ivory, and Mesopotamian seals in quantities that suggested a route proceeding from east to west. The evidence from Ulu Burun indicates that many trade transactions were private, while tomb paintings of the Egyptian New Kingdom showing Aegean envoys bearing gifts suggest a concomitant practice of elite gift exchange.

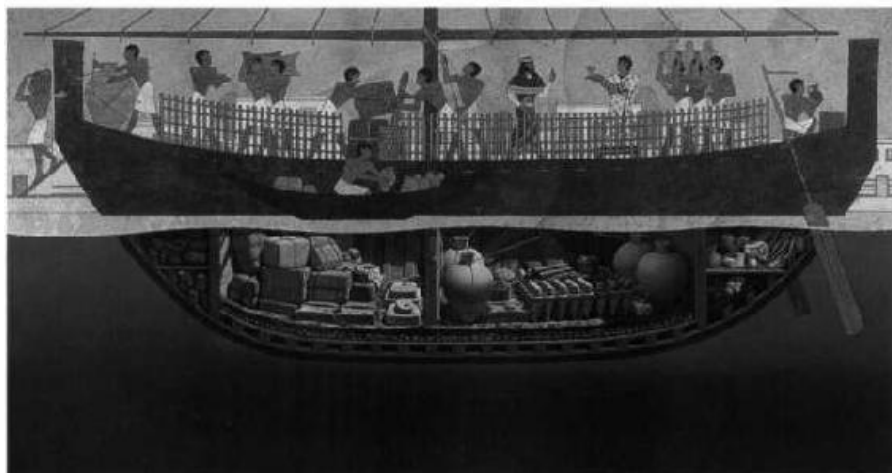
The growing intensity of contacts between the Aegean and its Near Eastern neighbours led to the development of what has been termed an international style in which a series of similar iconographic motifs as well as architectural features spread throughout the Mediterranean.' Few items illustrate the internationalism of the Late Bronze Age better than the famous carved lid of a box [133] from a thirteenth century BCE tomb at the Syrian site of Ugarit. This piece is decorated in an Aegean style on an imported material, namely ivory, in the possession of an owner dwelling in the Levant. The decoration represents a common theme of the Mediterranean Bronze Age, a Mistress of Animals, portrayed with the flounced skirt and exposed breasts typical of Aegean art since Minoan times. She is seated in the midst of a rocky landscape and holds sheaves of grain in her upraised arms as she is flanked by a pair of rampant goats. The iconography of this lid recalls the Mother of the Mountains seal from Knossos (see 55) as well as the many depictions of the antithetic group discussed in Chapter 5. The iconography of the antithetic group, loosely defined as animals flanking a revered object, is one example of the international style of the Late Bronze Age.

Many scholars have been tempted to see this lid as a product of Near Eastern craftsmanship in imitation of Mycenaean pieces, referring to the representation of the female as 'ugly', with 'bulging muscles', and 'generous oriental curves'. Such statements illustrate the way present norms, values, and prejudices inform the scholarly mediation of the past for consumption in the present. The implication of such

statements is, of course, that Near Eastern workmanship is somehow inferior or derivative or that oriental females were uglier and more generously endowed than western women. This historical tendency among western scholarship to portray the East in an unflattering light or as something 'exotic' or 'other' has been referred to as 'orientalism'. Orientalism emerged out of the British and French colonialist adventures of the nineteenth century that treated the cultures of the Near East as objects of study that uncoincidentally facilitated the abilities of these European colonizers to govern these newly conquered territories.' Recent scholarship places the ivory lid squarely within the tradition of Mycenaean workmanship and treats it as what it is: a remarkable testimony to the internationalism of the period either from the Greek mainland, or possibly from the ivory workshops that are believed to have been active on Cyprus at the end of the Bronze Age.'

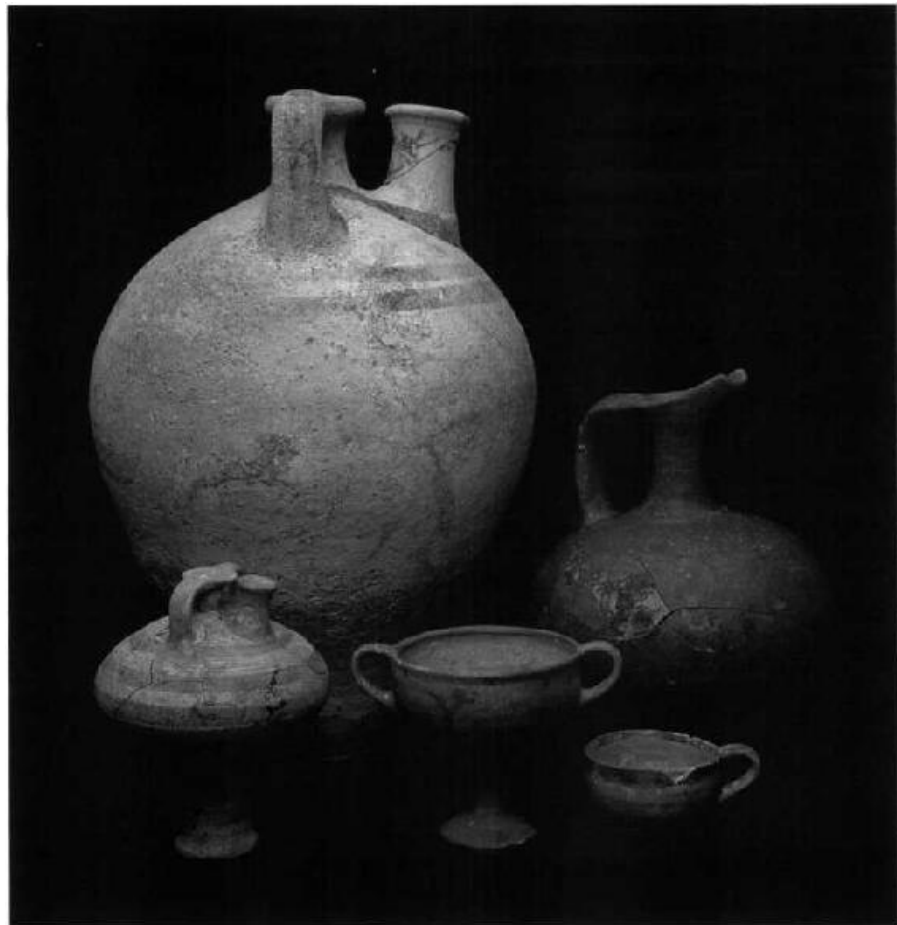
131

Reconstruction of a ship wrecked off Ulu Burun, Turkey, Late Bronze Age III, c. fourteenth century BCE. The cargo of the ship included objects from around the Mediterranean.



132

Assortment of Mycenaean vessels from the Ulu Burun shipwreck, Late Bronze Age III, c. fourteenth century BCE.



Cyprus, Palestine, and the Peoples of the Sea

The transmittal, influence, and survival of Aegean social practices at the end of the Bronze Age and after can be found in Cyprus as well as in the artistic traditions of the so-called Sea Peoples and Philistines in the Levant.

The island of Cyprus served as both a geographical and cultural bridge between the Aegean and the Near East, as indicated by the material remains which show clear evidence of cultural influences from both regions. Nothing more clearly demonstrates the multiculturalism found on Late Bronze Age Cyprus than the conical rhyton from a thirteenth-century BCE tomb at Kition [1341. The rhyton is made of faience, a complex, glassy substance composed of crushed quartz, sand, and sodium carbonate with mineral-based pigments added for colour and fired to give the outside a shiny surface.

Although we tend to associate the use of faience with the Egyptians, it was used for a wide variety of objects and decorative inlays throughout the Aegean as far back as the First Palace Period. The blue colour of the Cypriot rhyton was formed through the use of copper compounds while the use of black outline and various other colour inlays were used to render the three registers of decoration. The conical shape of the rhyton as well as the running spiral motifs, bull-hunting motifs, and flying gallop attitude of the bovines and caprids (sheep and/or goats) that decorate it are readily associated with Aegean art. The flying gallop pose in which an animal runs with its front and back legs fully extended originated in Crete around the end of the third millennium and spread to Egypt and the Near East by the end of the Bronze Age. It serves as another example of what has been termed the international style.

133

Goddess on the ivory lid of a pyxis (box) from a tomb at Ugarit, Syria, thirteenth century BCE. This 'Mistress of Animals' figure is of interest in its combination of Aegean style and motifs (note the flounced skirt and bare breasts of the woman) with ivory workmanship common to the Levant. Compare the 'Mother of the Mountains' seal from Knossos (55) and the depictions of the antithetic group.



The hunter in the central register is of particular interest. The conical cap he wears and the raised right arm with dagger recall the White Crown and smiting pose of Egyptian kings that originated in Predynastic representations of the late fourth millennium. The smiting posture was borrowed into Near Eastern art from Egypt as early as the nineteenth or eighteenth centuries BCE. The smiting god has been associated with the Syrian warrior god, Reshef, and with the storm god, Adad in Mesopotamia. He is also frequently associated with the bull as on this rhyton. It is significant that the iconography of the smiting god as a weather god continued throughout the Ancient Near East in the first millennium in Neo-Hittite Syria, the Levant, Cyprus, and Egypt until it was adopted by the Greeks to represent Zeus.⁷

Conical rhyton with bull hunting scenes, from a tomb at Kition, Cyprus, Late Cypriot II, c. thirteenth century BCE. The use of a bull, running spirals, bull-hunting scenes, and the 'flying gallop' of the animals are

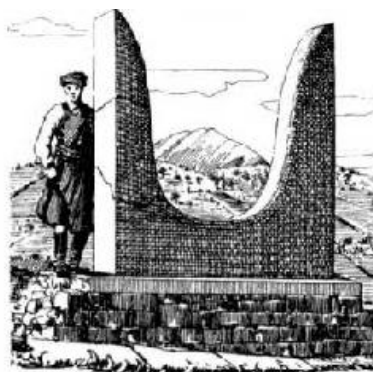
motifs closely associated with Aegean art.



The architecture of Cyprus also manifests a combination of

characteristics that point to cultural and design influences from the Aegean and the East, but interpreted in a local style of workmanship. The most notable of these influences is the widespread distribution of horned altars such as this one from Myrtou-Pigadhes [135a]. They call to mind the horns of consecration often associated with the Minoan palaces, although the Cypriot horns are rendered with flattened rather than rounded tips. In Minoan culture, the horns were frequently used to mark important entryways whereas in Cypriot culture they seem to be primarily associated with altars.

The stepped shape of the Cypriot altar base calls to mind a monumentalized version of the stepped double-axe bases found earlier in Crete as depicted on the sarcophagus from Haghia Triadha (see 117). We caution the reader that not all scholars accept the reconstruction of this altar which was based on careful and cogent study, however; smaller stepped features found elsewhere on Cyprus may have served as both bases and capitals. Some of these features begin to occur in the thirteenth century BCE and are interpreted by some as emblematic of the arrival of Mycenaean Greeks on the island. The depiction of bucrania (the Latin word for the head or horns of a bull) on clay sanctuary models from the Early Bronze Age, however, indicates that the cultic significance of the bull was long recognized in local Cypriot culture.



135a and b

Cypriot (Myrtou-Pigadhes) and Minoan (Knossos) 'horns of consecration', Late Cypriot 11, c. thirteenth century BCE. Although slightly different in style, double horns were important in both Crete and Cyprus.

Another tantalizing feature with Aegean affinities is the twelfth century BCE 'bath' or 'well' room [1361 located in House A at

the site of Hala Sultan Tekke. Particular characteristics including its rectangular shape, use of rectangular ashlar pavement slabs, and stepped entryway leading below the floor level call to mind the Minoan lustral basin. However, the lead waterproofing filling the interstices of the pavement slabs and the addition of a hole in the floor, possibly for drainage, indicate a more specific use incorporating water than its earlier Minoan counterparts which lack this combination of waterproofing and drainage."

Closer in function, if not in form, to a palatial Minoan structure is the interesting court-centred building at the Cypriot site of Kalavassos Ayios Dhimitreos known as Building X, the Ashlar Building [1371. Its thirteenth-century BCE date corresponds to the period after the abandonment and subsequent destruction of the Second Palace Period palaces and villas on Crete. Building X exhibits a local variation or interpretation of features we tend to associate with Minoan buildings in the form of a slightly recessed facade on the south, a main southern entrance, and a wing devoted to the storage of pithoi on the west in association with ashlar pillar supports. A different arrangement, but with an identical location for storage areas, was a regular feature of the earlier Minoan palaces.

The use of the pillar in Minoan buildings has been symbolically linked to the worship of stalactites and stalagmites in sacred caves as discussed earlier (Chapters 4 and 5). Its recurring use in association with storage areas has been interpreted as serving to protect the storage area while the stored goods could have been periodically released for purposes of communal feasting. Based on its monumental size, arrangement of features, and quality of workmanship, a similar scenario drawing out the relationships between ritual, storage, and communal feasting or redistribution of a particular commodity might be assumed for Building X. Here the pillar represents a certain economy of function, taking on the symbolic characteristics of an aniconic deity while also serving a structural purpose. Aniconic representations of deities have a long history on Cyprus while the pillar hall at Building X appears to be the most carefully constructed room of the building, further reinforcing the importance of monumental storage areas in the Aegean.

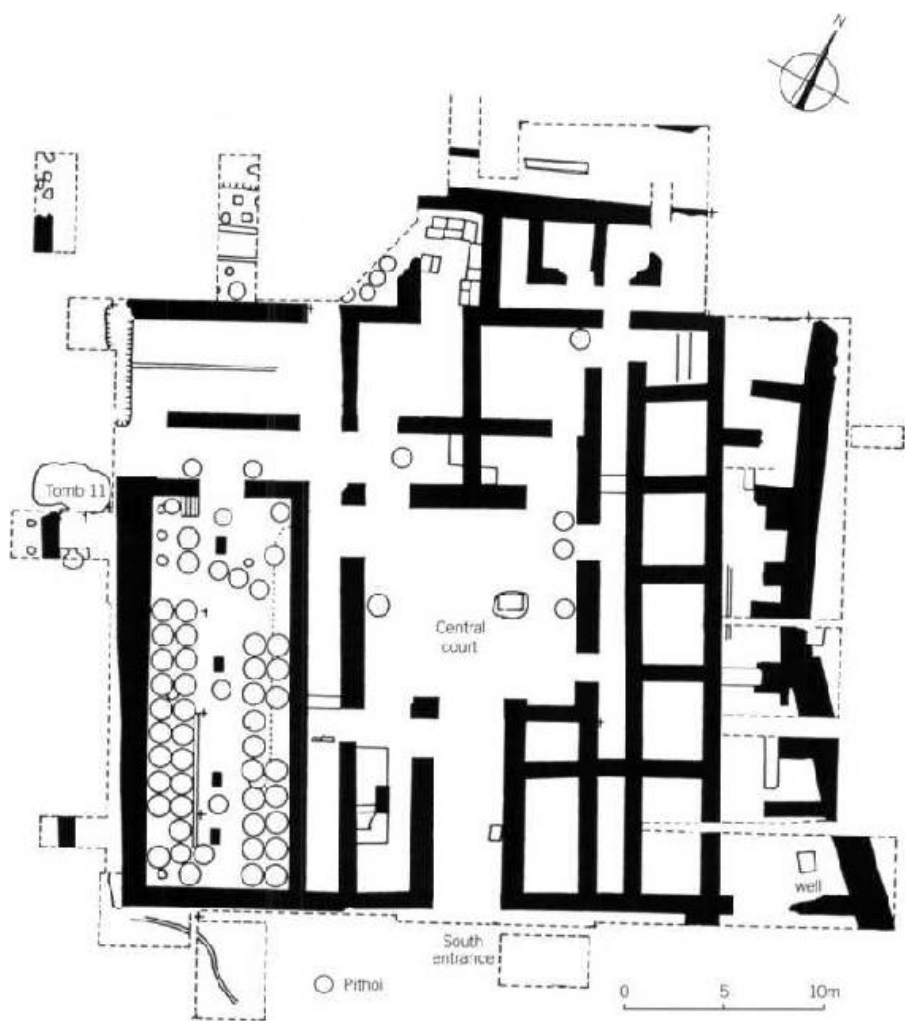
Bath or well room from House A at Hala Sultan Tekke, Cyprus, Late Cypriot III A1-2, c. twelfth century BCE. The rectangular shape of the room, its ashlar pavement slabs, and stepped entryway leading below

floor level, bear a superficial resemblance to Minoan 'lustral basins'.



137

Building X, the 'Ashlar Building' at Kalavassos Ayios Dhimitrios, Cyprus, Late Cypriot 11, c. thirteenth century BCE; note the central court, southern main entrance, and western storage area.



138

Amphoroid krater from Enkomi, Cyprus, Third Palace Period. The scene of two bulls flanking a sacred tree is yet another variant of the antithetic group common in the Aegean.



It can be suggested from this brief survey that Aegean artistic and architectural features were co-mingled with other traditions, transformed, and ultimately preserved in the archaeological memory of the Cypriot remains. The widespread distribution of Mycenaean-style pottery occurring along with local and Phoenician styles as well as the use of a script termed Cypro-Minoan may indicate a sizeable Aegean population on the island. The amphoroid krater (a large bowl used for the mixing of wine and water) from Enkomi [1381 pictured here is decorated in the pictorial style that became popular during the Third Palace Period. Although some modern art historians have remarked on the seemingly careless representations of the figures

during this period, such modern impositions and biases with regard to form and taste neglect the communicative purpose of these motifs. While most examples of this style come from Cyprus, scientific analyses have revealed that some were imports that originated on the Greek mainland. The depiction of two bulls flanking a sacred tree on the shoulder is just one more variation of the antithetic group that became so popular throughout the entire ancient Mediterranean.

Mycenaean pottery motifs are also a common feature in imports to the east as well as the later material culture of the early Iron Age Philistines in what is today the state of Israel, as shown in this stirrup jar with bird motif [1391]. Many archaeologists and art historians view pottery as the hallmark and chief indicator of Philistine culture. It typically includes many shapes and motifs well known from Mycenaean culture painted in the distinctively Philistine style of red and black on a white background.' The appearance of this pottery in the first half of the twelfth century to the eleventh century BCE coincides with the accounts and legends of the mysterious Sea Peoples.'" Earlier pottery pre-dating the Philistine pottery also has Mycenaean prototypes in terms of both shape and decoration. The presence of Cypriot, Egyptian, and local Canaanite elements in Philistine material culture testifies to wide-ranging cultural contacts and influences which intensified by the end of the Bronze Age. To focus entirely on pottery style does not adequately illustrate or explain these relationships.

The origin of the Philistines and their Aegean connections has been debated based on linguistic evidence, literature, and material culture. They are believed to have been among the Sea Peoples who appeared in the eastern Mediterranean in the thirteenth century BCE, as recounted in texts and monuments from the reign of Ramses III of Egypt. Who were the Sea Peoples? Among the various tribes mentioned are groups believed to be from Anatolia such as the Tjekker, Weshesh, and Ekwesh. Other groups such as the Peleset, Denyen, Sheklesh, and Sherden indicate several points of origins for the Sea Peoples as well as the Philistines. The Peleset are associated with the Philistines of the Levant as well as the Pelasgians of the Aegean. The Denyen have been associated with the Tribe of Dan of Israel as well as the group of Greeks known as the Danaans. The Sheklesh have been associated with Sicily and the Sherden with Sardinia.

Rather than looking for a single origin for the Sea Peoples, it might prove more helpful to think of them as different tribes or groups of displaced persons coming from different parts of the Mediterranean

after having being driven from their homes in the chaotic atmosphere at the end of the Bronze Age. Some of them are believed to have settled in Egypt where they served as mercenaries in the Egyptian army after their defeat while others seemed to have ended up in Anatolia, northern Syria, and the Levant.

To survey the Aegean connection with the Sea Peoples we need to return to the discussion of Mycenaean fortifications at the end of Chapter 5. The destruction of the Mycenaean fortifications was just one of a series of cataclysmic events that marked the end of the Bronze Age, along with the introduction of iron-working technology, and a change in the political fortunes of many Mediterranean cultures. Art was just one of many social structures that was affected. There are a number of theories and models that have been put forward to explain these cataclysmic events and just a few brief remarks can be made here to explain what many textbooks refer to as a period of artistic decline divorced from historical events. In his book on Greek fortifications, Frederick Winter states that 'the Mycenaeans were able to construct artificial defenses so immense as to withstand any hostile assault', yet their walls were breached. How could the mighty citadels of the Mycenaeans with their supposedly impregnable walls, internal water supplies, underground passageways, and massive defensive bastions fail? The gradual modifications of the fortress at Mycenae in the thirteenth century BCE suggest a perceived threat.



Philistine stirrup jar with birds looking backwards in Metope panels.
From Tell Gezer, Israel.

These walls did not simply prevent attack, but also served to deny access to rustic villagers living in the vicinity. It is noteworthy that a new type of pottery appears in Mycenaean Greece at this time. It was not the brightly painted wheel-made pottery of the Mycenaeans that attracts the interest of modern art historians, yet it is significant nonetheless. The simple, hand-made works of country rustics, termed 'barbarian' wares, have been found in Greece, the Danube, and as far away as Troy. It is part of the basic everyday repertoire of an uncomplicated, mobile lifestyle that included clothes, weapons, language, and the basic implements of daily life. Archaeologists have hypothesized that these rustic peoples were being recruited by the Mycenaeans and others as mercenary warriors. As such, they may have been provided with an opportunity to plunder the wealth of the Mycenaean cities from the inside. It is even possible that much of the Mycenaean Greek warrior class was already absent from its cities, carrying out raids in the Mediterranean, and leaving its homes poorly defended.

Trade, and the wealth that accompanied it, may have invited piracy by renegade warriors such as Pijamaradus and others, as recounted in the annals of the Hittites. Or, as the Mycenaean cities fell to mercenary insiders and bands of rustic marauders from both Greece and central Europe, their inhabitants might, in turn, have been encouraged to flee their homes. If this was the case, then where did they go and what did they do? As refugees, these displaced Mycenaean Greeks may have spread throughout the Mediterranean, displacing other peoples from their cities, who then followed suit, creating a sort of domino effect throughout the Aegean and the East. Some would have settled in the East while others continued plundering or sought their fortunes in the service of foreign armies. In such a context, the glorious tales of victory by Homer's Achaeans against the Trojans may have served as a propagandistic device for transforming the defeat and displacement of being driven from one's home into a tale of victory and heroism.

What other evidence is there to support such a hypothesis beyond an unremarkable type of pottery? Not uncoincidentally, the two-edged or Naue II tanged or flange-hilted sword along with the bronze fibula (a type of large safety pin used for fastening a garment) appear by the end of the thirteenth century BCE. Examples of the Naue II sword are not only found within the citadel of Mycenae, but are also known to have been brandished by the Sea Peoples. The Naue II sword seems to have originated in central Europe, but it is also found in Greece and

seems to have spread quickly throughout the ancient Mediterranean by the end of the Bronze Age. It has been suggested that it was the cut and thrust battle tactics facilitated by this new weapon that inspired the transition to iron technology as a means of producing a stronger sword to counter its effect. It is believed by some that iron technology was first developed on Cyprus in the twelfth century BCE where it was a naturally occurring by-product in the process of copper smelting. It was discovered that iron could be refined through tempering, a process of repeated heating and cooling in which carbon was introduced to harden it by heating it in charcoal. This technology spread to Palestine in the eleventh century BCE, and then reached Greece.

Hebrew bible references to Caphtor associate Crete with the homeland of their contemporary Philistine or Palestinian neighbours. Not all scholars are willing to accept this association despite corroborating evidence from Near Eastern cuneiform references to Kaptaru and the linguistically similar Egyptian word for Crete, Keftiu." Others place Philistine origins in Anatolia, in Cilicia. The Aegean as one of several points of origin for the Sea Peoples and the Philistine culture of the Early Iron Age Levant seems inextricably connected.

Material culture is more convincing. We have already noted similarities between the pottery of the Philistines and that of the Mycenaean Greeks. Specific details corroborate the representations found on Egyptian reliefs of Ramses III. The bird-headed prow of the Sea Peoples' ships finds iconographic parallels on Mycenaean pottery. The feathered or spiky headdresses associated with the Sea Peoples are found on the earlier Phaistos disk (see 37), on an ivory gaming board from Enkomi, Cyprus, and on the 'B' side of the Warrior vase from Mycenae.

The Warrior vase has often been treated by art historians as an emblematic example of the warlike character of the Mycenaean Greek peoples to be simplistically contrasted with representations of the peaceful Minoans that were created in a different era hundreds of years earlier. If we examine the Warrior vase as a product of its time, we shall see that it communicates a great deal of information about both the human drama and the military strategy of the period to the modern viewer who chooses to look beyond the artistic skill of the craftsman who made it.

The date of this piece to the Postpalatial Period marks the persistence of the pictorial style beyond the destruction of the citadel at Mycenae. A woman tearing at her hair looks on as a company of

soldiers wearing horned helmets, carrying spears with bags attached, circular shields, and wearing greaves march away to parts unknown. The tearing at the hair as a sign of mourning is also found in Egyptian art and described in Mesopotamian literature and appears again in Greek art of the later, Geometric, Period. The form of the vase is that of a krater, which, as we have said, is a large bowl used for the mixing of wine and water. We might imagine a communal drink-test before these soldiers leave their homes, perhaps never to return, or the funerary banquet at a hero's grave. The greaves or shin-guards on the departing warriors are associated with Greek warriors while the horned helmets and panelled kilts with wide hems and tassels are commonly associated with Egyptian representations of the Sea Peoples, particularly the group known as the Sherden.

The horned headdresses associated with the Sherden are also found on bronze figurines from Iron Age Sardinia, as well as on a figurine from Enkomi in Cyprus known as the Ingot God. Sherden corselets with ribs curving downward and curved round shields are also found on a Mycenaean ivory mirror handle from Enkomi. The two-edged or Naue II sword brandished by the Sea Peoples originated in central Europe, but came into the ancient Mediterranean by way of Greece as discussed above.

Military expansion and commerce spread Philistine culture through Palestine." Its dominance continued in the region through the mideleventh century BCE. Their eleventh-century BCE assimilation of local Semitic deities such as Dagon, Baal, and the goddess Ashtoreth seems to eclipse the earlier dominance of a Great Goddess of the Aegean world.

Burial practices employing anthropoid coffins in rock-cut rectangular chamber tombs with stepped entryways and Philistine pottery point to a combination of influences from both Egyptian and Mycenaean Greek burial practices. Coffin lids from the cemetery at Beth-Shean depict the feathered or spiky crown with diadem of the Sea People warriors as depicted on the Medinet Habu reliefs in Egypt and on the rarely depicted 'B' side of the Warrior krater from Mycenae.

The stratum X temple at Tell Qasile, a newly founded Philistine settlement in the twelfth century BCE near the coast of what is now central Israel, resembles Mycenaean sanctuaries at Phylakopi on Melos and at Mycenae in layout and in details." Finds included Philistine stirrup jars that were placed in a niche. The stirrup jar is a shape that originates in the Aegean and was frequently used to transport perfumed oil (see 132). It is characterized by its globular body, strap

handles, and false spout. One of these was decorated with a bird pattern-a distinctly Philistine motif with Mycenaean parallels reaching from Cyprus and Crete to the Greek mainland. A bronze double axe that was placed on the altar calls to mind the Minoan practice of venerating the double axe.

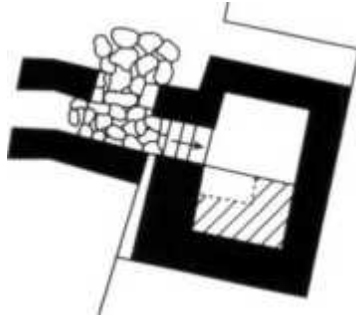
Animal-headed rhyta and terracotta female figurines, both familiar features in the Bronze Age Aegean, are widely distributed among Philistine sites. An archaeologist who studies the Philistines, Trude Dothan, sees such objects as the last echo of a long Minoan and Mycenaean tradition. While Dothan believes that a female deity was the focus of the Tell Qasile cult, an Egyptian-style plaque depicting male and female silhouettes also indicates dualistic cult practices. As discussed in Chapter S, the evidence from the shrine at Phylakopi indicates similar male and female associations. It is significant that two Near Eastern smiting god figurines were found in the vicinity of the sanctuary at Phylakopi. We might imagine these Philistine temples as the inheritors of a long tradition of ritual practice that had its origins on Minoan Crete, as further indicated by features such as this horned altar from Beersheba [1401.

Tradition and transformation

Aegean religion at the end of the Bronze Age

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Plan of the Late Minoan II I shrine at Gournia in eastern Crete, built immediately north of the earlier palatial compound.



While many Aegean material, cultural, and social traditions survived for a time in the Near East, where they blended with local practices, some Bronze Age traditions survived into the Postpalatial Period while others continued into the so-called Dark or Iron Age in the Aegean proper. As new studies continue to add to our knowledge of the period, it becomes increasingly clear that the life of the average person continued much as usual while it is modern scholarship that has found itself in the dark about this period until recently. Here, we would like to mention a couple of examples that point to the survival of Minoan religious and social practices in Crete in contrast to changes in artistic and social practice elsewhere within a framework of continuous use.

Cult activity at Postpalatial sites in Crete such as Gazi, Gournia f 1411, and Kavousi tends to be focused on small rectangular rooms with benches running along one wall for placing offerings, commonly referred to as bench shrines or sanctuaries. Sometimes already existing structures were adapted to the needs of the community, as at Kannia and Knossos. The character of the finds from such shrines has been taken to indicate the veneration of a Great Goddess, or perhaps a more general veneration of the chthonic or earthly powers of nature. Offerings are typically of a straightforward character and may include miniature votive vases, human and animal figurines, vases for pouring liquid offerings, especially cups or bowls, items connected with the life-giving power of the sea such as shells of various types, and more

personal items such as fragments of tools or simple adornments.

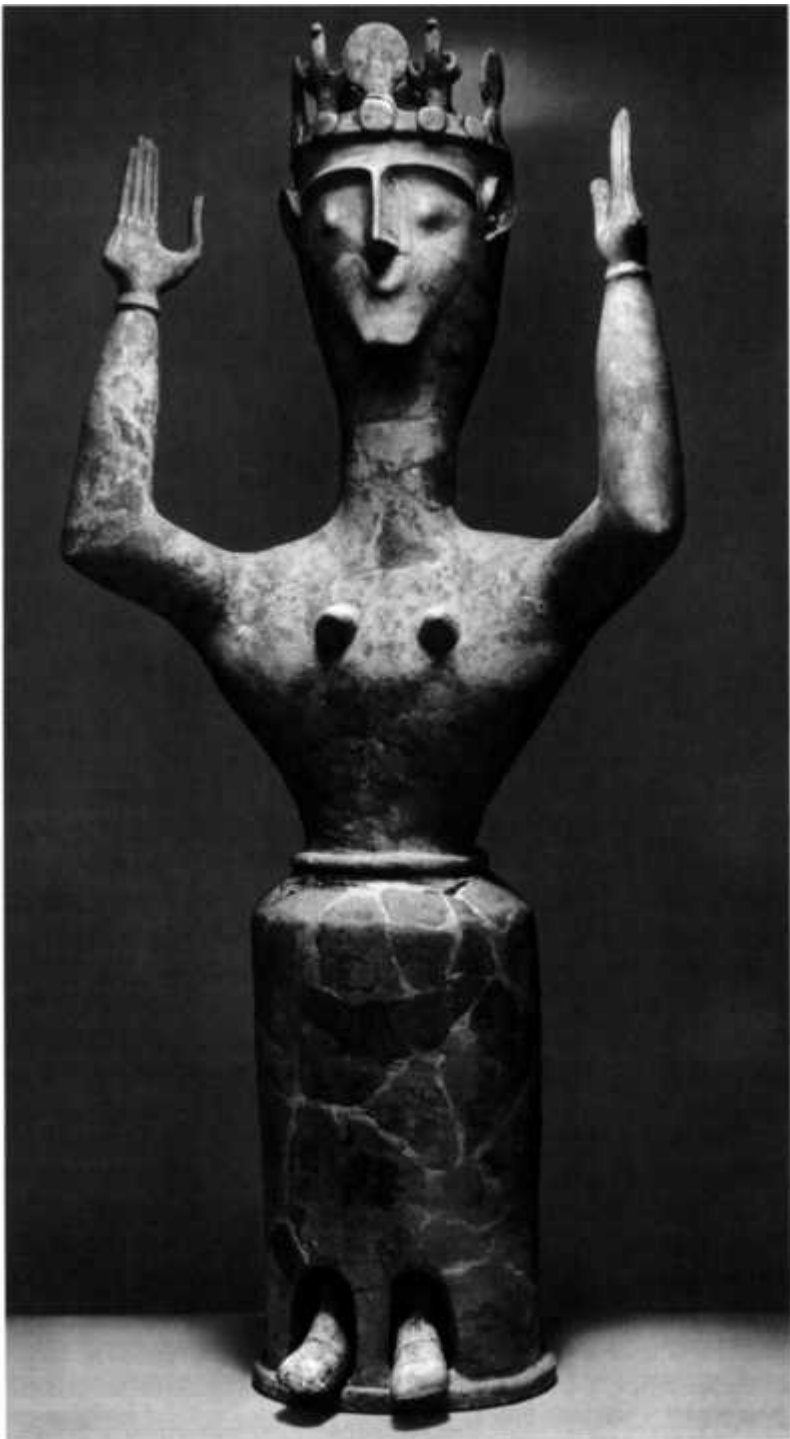
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Iron Age horned altar from Beersheba, Palestine, c.700 BCE.



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Minoan 'Goddess with Upraised Arms', Karphi, eastern Crete, Late Minoan III. Statuettes like this may have been left as offerings in town shrines.



Offerings of a more specialized nature commonly found in such shrines include libation tables, snake tubes, and statues and statuettes representing the so-called Minoan Goddess with Upraised Arms, such

as the one pictured here from the mountaintop settlement at Karphi [1421 in eastern Crete. The libation tables take different forms and are made out of various materials such as stone or clay, but are distinguished by one or more depressions or cupules thought to function as receptacles for an offering of grain or liquid.

The snake tubes are clay cylinders that served as stands for bowls or other receptacles. Their name refers to the decorative snakes that also served as carrying handles. They call to mind the portable altars found in other ancient civilizations such as Rome and Egypt, and it would not be unreasonable to think of them as taking on a similar function. The number of snake tubes placed in a shrine appears to correspond roughly to the number of goddess figures. Along with cups and bowls placed upside down to allow liquid offerings to empty into the ground, these snake tubes would seem to emphasize the chthonic aspects of Minoan religion.

Like the snake tubes, the main element of the goddess figures is the cylindrical body. This is widened out to form the skirt that is made as a single unit on the potter's wheel. The head and neck were also thrown as a single unit on the wheel and joined to the body. The facial features, knob-like breasts, long rope-like strands of hair, hands, and arms were modelled from separate pieces of clay that were added to the body. Traces of paint indicate that colour was used to accentuate the characteristics of at least some of these representations. Despite the poor quality of the coarse clay which has made it difficult for modern restorers to mend these figures, their importance as a focal point for the Postpalatial cultures of Crete should not be neglected.

Nanno Marinatos points out that the identification of these statues as goddesses began with Evans' interpretation of seal representations.¹⁴ Although this interpretation is accepted by many, it is not grounded in written evidence and remains an assumption. It is also possible that the statues represent effigies of priestesses venerating a deity or deities in perpetuity.

The crowns or bodies of the goddesses are adorned with different objects such as horns, disks, snakes, birds, or poppies. These attributes may indicate different aspects of one deity, different deities, or may even indicate practitioners connected with different cults. The horns may more generally symbolize the power of the bull or more specifically indicate a weather deity, while the poppy with its many seeds may be a symbol of fertility. The disks call to mind similar depictions on representations of Sherden warriors. The gesture of the upraised arms has been connected with the bestowing of blessings by

the goddess, a priestess invoking the appearance of a deity, or the supplication of a priestess to a deity. The gesture of the upraised arms is unusual in the Palatial Period in Crete, but it was common in the Near East where a goddess with upraised arms is involved in presenting a human protagonist to a god or divine king." Could these Postpalatial goddess figures be functioning in a similar manner, that is, as intercessors between a human worshipper and the unseen realm of the divine?

The hollow bodies of the clay goddess figures would have made it possible to carry them on top of poles. This practice may have originated on the mainland where wheel-made figures similar to the Lady of Phylakopi occur in significant numbers at Mycenae in the Third Palace Period. Nanno Marinatos has suggested that these Postpalatial goddess figures on Crete were carried through the local town or village on poles in a procession that ended with their placement on the bench in the shrine or sanctuary. This calls to mind similar processions with larger statues that had a long history in the ancient Near East, as well as the Panathenaic procession to bring a new peplos (garment) to Athena in later Athens. The focus of such communal processions on a town shrine marks a shift from the central administrative structures, termed palaces, as a focal point for cult activity and has implications for the emergence of the Greek temple.

The practice of placing offerings or cult dedications on an internal shelf or bench along the wall persisted into the Iron Age in Crete at the Geometric Period temple of Apollo, Leto, and Artemis at Dreros as well as at the Orientalizing Period temple at Prinias. Additionally, the use of a pillar instead of a column to support the front porch at Prinias is believed by some to reflect a continuation of Minoan traditions.

143

Bronze Age terracotta female head from the Ayia Irini Temple, Kea, in an eighth-century BCE context, placed in a ring on the temple pavement as the god Dionysos. The eighth-century BCE placement may be connected with the legend of the god as emerging from beneath the earth.



As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Temple at Ayia Irini at Kea had a long history of use. A cup dating to the end of the sixth century BCE bearing a dedicatory inscription to the Greek god Dionysos provides clear evidence that the Temple had become the site of his cult." However, the change in cult practice may go back even further to the Geometric Period. A head from one of the Bronze Age female statues discussed above was found placed in a ring base on the floor of room i in a Late Geometric context, c.700 BCE [1431. Many scholars associate this ensemble with the cult of Dionysos.

Some have connected such abbreviated representations of Dionysos with his chthonic aspect: that is, his rising out of the ground. Alternatively, the ring base has been interpreted as an abbreviated representation of his body which might be likened to an aniconic representation. Although scoring on the chin was done intentionally by the sculptor to promote better melding of the clay pieces, it could have been interpreted as a beard by those using the building more than a dozen generations later. Separated from the original context of its female body, the original history of the head would have been forgotten as it was passed down from generation to generation as an heirloom. Finally, the head acquired a new identity as Dionysos as a result of being reinscribed into a new context.

Some scholars would like to take the worship of Dionysos back as far as the Mycenaean Period and possibly even the Minoan Period, citing the name of Dionysos on Linear B texts from Mycenaean Pylos and suggesting that the Kea statues were worshippers or participants in a liturgy." However, the Linear B texts do not associate Dionysos with Kea and there is a relative absence of male imagery at the site. A thorough contextual study of the later Mycenaean art works and their relationships to each other and the building might clarify the matter. The continued use of the building for cult purposes does not guarantee that social life, religion, or customs remained static and unchanged for 700 years.

What goes around comes around: Daedalus returns to Crete

Part of the Iron Age legacy of Aegean Art within Greece was dependent on both its survival and its transmission to the Near East and its reintroduction to Greece through the re-establishment of contacts.¹ Two significant points of this reintroduction were by way of Crete and the site of Lefkandi in Euboia, a large island off the east coast of Attica. Lefkandi was the site of both a bronze and an iron foundry in the tenth century BCE. These installations indicate that prosperity continued in the Aegean despite the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces. Here, a tumulus marking the interment of the cremated remains of a warrior chief, accompanied by his horses and his consort covered in gold sheeting, testifies to the re-emergence of wealth and complex social organization. The neighbouring settlement became increasingly wealthy with gold and other imports from the Levant while the metal-working and granulation techniques, once present in the Bronze Age, were reintroduced.

The practice of dedicating bronze votive figurines, weapons, jewellery, and other items at open air sanctuaries such as Kato Syme and at sacred caves such as the Idaean Cave continued unabated on Crete, in some cases into the classical period. Many of these later figurines have the columnar form, elongated necks, and simple lines characteristic of art from the Geometric Period. In many instances, however, oriental motifs such as exotic animals and warriors in eastern attire such as conical helmets decorated works produced locally, as on votive shields from the Idaean Cave [1441]. We would like to call particular attention to the animals rendered in the flying gallop attitude, a representation that originated in Bronze Age Crete, found its way into Near Eastern iconography, and turns up once again in the Aegean.



144

Reconstruction of a bronze votive shield from the Idaean Cave, north face of Mount Ida, central Crete, eighth to seventh centuries BCE. Known as the Hunt Shield, it depicts a hunting scene with exotic animals and warriors in Near Eastern attire with conical helmets. Most probably made on Crete and combining Cretan and Levantine motifs. The concentric registers depict turbulent scenes of warriors battling lions, surroundings central animal face.

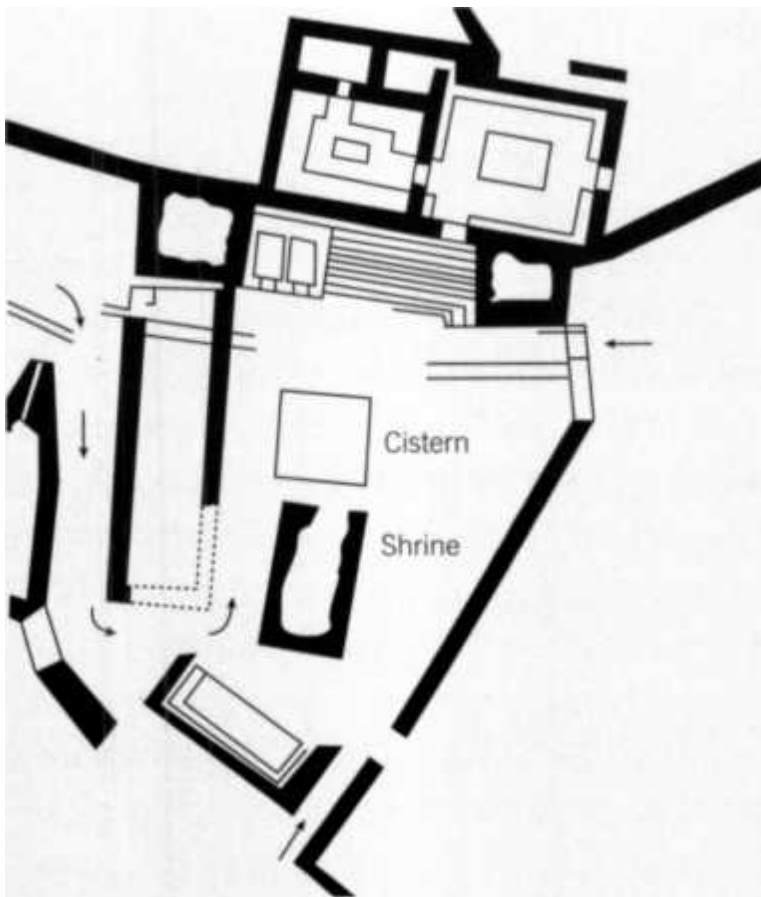


145

Late Geometric krater, Argos, Greece, c. eighth century BCE. The 'Horse-Leader' motif recalls the Master or Mistress of Animals motif prevalent throughout the Aegean and Near East in the Bronze Age.

146

Plan of the centre of Lato, eastern Crete, eighth century BCE. The compound resembles the later prytaneia or assembly-houses of classical Greek cities, while the wide stairway recalls the 'theatral areas' of the Bronze Age Minoan palaces of the previous millennium.



The Master or Mistress of Animals motif so prevalent throughout the Aegean in the Bronze Age may have come back to Greece by way of the Levant, as shown in this representation of the Horse Leader on a Late Geometric krater [145] from the Argolid. It has proved possible to trace Bronze Age examples of this motif in the pictorial style of the Mycenaean on an amphoroid krater from Ugarit." The East served as a haven of Mycenaean refuge and eventual assimilation until contacts with the Aegean again intensified in the Iron Age.

Lato

This plan, 146, shows the centre or agora of Lato, an eighth-century BCE upland town in eastern Crete, which illustrates one stage in the gradual conversion of sub-Minoan towns into small Greek city states.² Lato's town centre is located in the saddle between two peaked hills, on which stood the town's residential quarters proper. On a terrace above a trapezoidal open area (the agora, which contained a small temple, a cistern, and a later exedra or benched seating area) is a

twopart building housing the assembly of the town, and supporting its governmental functions.

This compound, resembling the later prytaneia of classical Greek cities, stood above a wide series of steps very reminiscent of the theatral area of the earlier Minoan palaces, for example those at Phaistos or Knossos. It is tempting indeed to see the assemblage and formal stagings of community functions of this eighth-century town as suggesting the continuation of practices which by this time would have been over a millennium old in Crete, possibly surviving changes in population, language, and forms of governance. Lato may be a useful object lesson in this regard, alerting us to the complex interactions between formation and usage, and their sometimes close, sometimes distant relationships.

To end this book it is necessary to return to the place where we started it. This final chapter has been a brief introduction to some of the complicated cultural and historical issues that are key to understanding the end of the Aegean Bronze Age and the transformations and survivals of its artistic and architectural practices. We have attempted to show how it might be possible to place Aegean artistic representations within a context of historical events, not only within those that we might be able to reconstruct from antiquity, but also within our own recent modern contexts and concerns-which have always and will continue to frame all of these endeavours.

The bibliography on many of the topics discussed in this final chapter (no less than of the issues raised in earlier chapters) is quite extensive; a thorough understanding of these problems, and a realistic appreciation of the genuine difficulties in the construction of the historical (not to speak of the pre-historic) past, requires considerable investigation of the literature in many fields. As with the previous chapters, this final one has been crafted as an introductory window out on to a representative selection of images, objects, sites, controversies, and interpretations which the reader may wish to investigate at length, using the resources of the collected references and bibliography at the end of the volume.

Underlying our understanding of the end of the Aegean Bronze Age, no less than its beginnings and evolutions, is the vexed issue of the relationship of the Aegean world to the origins of a distinctly European civilization which-as we have discussed at some length in Chapter i-is in no small measure an artefact of modern social and political agendas and needs. As we have indicated, the discovery of the cultures of Minoan Crete, Mycenaean Greece, and the Cyclades;

their inscription within a broader context of Mediterranean interrelations; and their post-Bronze Age legacies, have over the past 130 years increasingly challenged prevailing Eurocentric notions of the unique and original properties of Hellenic art, style, and culture.

They have done so in part by rendering less opaque the historical foundations that the early modern European nation states articulated for themselves in (and as) the world of Hellenic Greece-revealing a rich and complex pre-Hellenic antiquity, that of the Aegean Bronze Age, with all of its very complex interactions with the dynamically evolving mosaic of societies, cultures, and artistic practices of the wider eastern Mediterranean region.

In foregrounding these problems, our study has aimed to demonstrate three basic things. First: that no discussion of historical development is complete without a discussion of its complement, namely the means and motivations of historical construction and reconstruction; of history-writing itself. Second: that to articulate identity-whether in the immediate present or in the very distant past-is always to speak of relationships that both link and distinguish individuals and peoples.

Finally: in carrying out our own readings of some of the more interesting examples of the art and architecture of the Aegean Bronze Age that remain to us, we have sought to highlight some of what is deeply at stake in the modern art historical and archaeological enterprises of 'reading' images, buildings, and objects as documents or evidence for the mentality, nature, or character of individuals or peoples-in construing art as history, as it were. We have sought to do this in part by calling attention in our own interpretations and conjectures to the extraordinary difficulties in even imagining what may have been significant to the makers and users of pictures and objects made three to five millennia ago.

As we have seen quite concretely, there are few guarantees that any one interpretation of an object, however seemingly obvious or natural to our eyes, might replicate anything remotely like what its original makers and users might have made of it. Nor, as we have also seen, are our own favourite or attractive interpretations necessarily guaranteed a long shelf-life. The study of Aegean art is a field which has grown exponentially, and has been evolving in dramatic and not easily predictable ways during its first century. It seems reasonable to expect that the second century of our knowledge of the art and culture of these extraordinary peoples will be at least as exciting, and most likely even more so.

Notes

Note: Short titles for texts are given in the notes; full citations can be found in the Bibliography.

Chapter 1. Introduction: Aegean Art and Architecture

- i. See Bietak, 'Minoan Wall-Paintings' (1992), 26-8; and Avants: The Gapitalofthe Hvksos (1996).
2. For an overview of linguistic evidence, see Packard, Minoan LinearA(1974). See also Finkelberg, 'Minoan Inscriptions' (1990-1), 43-85.
3. See Preziosi, Art of Art History (1998), chps i and 2.
4. See, for example, Rivers, Evolution of Culture (1906).
5. See Blackwood, Classification o(Objects 0970)-
6. Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1921-36), vols 1-4.
7. Lawrence, Greek Architecture (1957), 34. 8. See the discussion on the shaft graves in Vermeule, Greece in the BronzeAge (1972), 82-110.
9. See, for example, Powell, Classical Mythology (1998), 203-25.
- io. For an overview of recent scholarship on the Dorian invasion, see Drews, Coming ofthe Greeks ([988), 203-25.
- it. See Antliffand Leighton, 'Primitive' (1996), 170-84.

12. Pollitt, *Art of Greece* (1965) and *Art of Rome* (1966).
13. See Preziosi, *Art History* (1998).
14. On connoisseurship, see Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History* (1989), 29-30.
15. Carruthers, *Book of Memory* (1990).
16. See Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition* (1983).
17. On Bronze Age chronology, see Warren and Hankey, *Aegean Bronze Age Chronology* (1989); and Manning, *Absolute Chronology* (1995).
18. See Bernal, *Blat Athena* (1987 and 1991), vols i and 2; Lefkowitz and MacLean Rogers (eds), *Blat Athena Revisited* (1996).

Chapter 2. The Neolithic Period and the Prepalatial Early Bronze Age

„ Tsountas, *Ai Proiistorikai Akropolis Diminiou Kai Sesklou* (1908).

2. Chourmouziadis, *To neolithiko Dimini* (1979).

3. Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology* (1991), 35.

4. See the section by Gimbutas in Renfrew et al., *Excavations at Sitagroi* (1986), vol. 1.

5. For example, see Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou, *Body Imagery* (1997), 88-92, for a detailed bibliography.

6. See Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles* (1991), 54-5.

7. For a detailed treatment see Renfrew et al., *Excavations at Sitagroi* (1986), vol. I; and Renfrew, 'Burnt House at Sitagroi' (1970), 131-4.

8. Hodder, *Domestication of Europe* (1990), 60-2.

9. *Ibid.*, 44ff.

to. *Ibid.*, 51.

it. See Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983), 175-91.

12. Caskey, 'Excavations at Lerna' (1954), 3; (1955), 25; (1956), 147; (1957), 142; (1958), 125; (1959), 202.

13. For a more detailed discussion and additional bibliography see Caskey, 'Early Bronze Age Hearths' (1990), 13-21.

14. See Hawes et al., *Gournia, Vasiliki and other Prehistoric Sites* (1908); Zois, 'Pour un schema evolutif de l'architecture minoenne'

(1990), 75-93-

15. See Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult* (1985), 8; Dickinson, *Aegean Bronze Age* (1994), 262-3.

16. Tenwolde, 'Myrtos Revisited' (1992.), 1-24; Warren, 'Myrtos' (1972); Whitelaw, 'Settlement at Phournou Koryphi' (1983), 323-45; and 'Early Minoan Household' (1994), 335-6.

IT Warren, 'Myrtos' (1972), 209-10.

18. *Ibid.*, 86.

19. As reconstructed by Sanders, 'Behavioral Conventions and Archaeology' (1990), in comparison with rooms 79-82.
20. Warren, 'Myrtos' (1972), 87-
21. Ibid., 85-
22. See Brea, Poliochni, cittd preistorica nell'isola di Lemnos (1964-76).
23. For an overview of Aegean burial practices see Dickinson, Aegean Bronze Age (1994).
24. See ibid., 211.
25. For an overview of Early Cycladic sculpture, see Getz-Preziosi, Early Cycladic Sculpture (1985).
26. Renfrew, Cycladic Spirit (1991), 99-104.
- 27- On forgeries, see Gill and Chippindale, 'Material and Intellectual Consequences of Esteem for Cycladic Figures' (1993), 601-59.
28. For Predynastic slate palettes, see Davis, Masking the Blow (1992).
29. For a discussion of these tombs see Xanthoudides, Vaulted Tombs (1924), more recently Branigan, Pre-Palatial (1970); for a discussion of possible Cypriot influence, see Hood, 'Cyprus and the Early Bronze Age' (1985) 43-9; for a specific discussion of Kamilari see Levi, 'La tomba a tholos di Kamilari presso Festós' (1961-2), 7-148. For east Cretan house tombs discussed above, see Soles, Pre-palatial Cemeteries (1992).

30. For Chrysolakkos see Demargne, 'Nccropoles de Mallia' (1945); and for a recent discussion of the bee pendant, see Kitchell, 'The Mallia Wasp Pendant Reconsidered' (1981), 9-15.

Chapter 3. The First Palace Period

1. See Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983).
2. For the site of Phaistos, see L. Pernier, *11 palazzo minoico di Festos* (1935 and 1950), vols i and 2; Levi, 'The Recent Excavations at Phaistos' (1964); 'Festbs: metodo e criteri di on scavo archeologico' (1968); 'Fest6s e la civiltà minoica I' (1976); Levi and Carinci, 'Festbs e la civiltà minoica II' (1988).
3. See Marinatos, *Minoan Religion* (1993), 124-5.
 4. Watrous, 'Crete from Earliest Prehistory' (1994), 742-4; Kanta, 'Monastiraki' (1992), 194-7.
 5. See Schoep, 'Home Sweet I Tome' (1994), 189-210, on the significance of building models.
 6. See distribution chart in Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983), 150.
 - 7- On sealing practices, see Weingarten, 'Sealing Structures of Minoan Crete' (1986), 279-98.
 8. Marinatos, *Minoan Religion* (1993), 112-14.
 9. The following summarizes material found in Tsipopoulou, 'Ayia Photiai' (1992), 66-9; Tsipopoulou, 'Ayia Photia Siteias' (1988), 31-47; and Watrous, 'Crete from Earliest Prehistory' (1994), 722-3.
 10. As illustrated in Barber, *Cyclades in the*

it. See Davaras, Guide to CretanAntiquities (1976),128-9.

12. Neopalatial annexes are detailed in Hitchcock and Preziosi, 'Knossos Unexplored Mansion' (1997), 51-62.

13. See Graham,'Windows, Recesses, and Piano Nobile' (1960), 329-33; Palaces o 'Crete (1987),162ft.

14. See Watrous,'Crete from Earliest Prehistory'(1994),722.

15. A schematic plan of the Knossian Old Palace maybe found in MacGillivray, 'Early History of the Palace at Knossos' (1994), 45-55; for a detailed discussion of the problems involved in interpreting the architectural remains at Knossos, see Driessen, 'Early Destruction in the Mycenaean Palace'(1990).

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IT See Evans, Palace ofMinos at Knossos (1921), vol. 1, 207-

18. See, for example, Marinatos,'Public Festivals in the West Courts' (1987), 135-43; Gesell,'Minoan Palace and Public Cult' (1987),123-8.

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23. Marinatos, 'Public Festivals in the West Courts' (1987), 138.

24. Cadogan, 'Palaces of Minoan Crete' (1976), 111-12.

25. Marinatos, 'Public Festivals in the West Courts' (1987), 137.

26. Such a scenario is recounted by Marinatos, *op. cit.*, who sees it happening at the three major palace sites of Knossos, Phaistos, and Mallia.

27. Hdgg, 'On the Reconstruction of the West Facade' (1987), 129-34.

28. This location of a window is consonant with Graham's belief (Graham, 'Windows, Recesses, and Piano Nobile' (1960), 329-33) that such shallow recesses indicated the presence of windows.

29. Branigan, 'Economic Role of the First Palaces' (1987), 247-8.

30. Both Preziosi, 'Minoan Architectural Design' (1983), 87 and Branigan, 'Economic Role of the First Palaces' (1987), 249, interpret the west court as a controlled interface between the 'city' and the 'palace'.

31. Preziosi, 'Minoan Architectural Design' 1983; Immerwahr, 'People in the Frescoes' (1983).

32. Strasser, 'Koulouras of Knossos and Phaistos' (1994), 306; 'Storage and States on Prehistoric Crete' (1998), 73-100, has recently completed an exhaustive comparative and ethnographic study with important implications for understanding the economic and social functions of these 'palaces'.

33. Detailed in Evans' account of tree and pillar cult(s), 'Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult' (1901), 99-204-

34. Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1930), vol. 3, 66-9, with a discussion of other representations of 'sacred dancing' following the discovery of the fresco.

35. Marinatos, 'Public Festivals in the West Courts' (1987), 135•

36. Krattenmaker, 'Minoan Architectural Representation' (1991).

37. This programme is detailed in Cameron's 1975 dissertation, A General Study of Minoan Frescoes', summarized briefly in Cameron, 'The "Palatial" Thematic System' (1987), 321-8.

38. Cameron dates it to MM IIIB/LM IA (Cameron, 'The "Palatial" Thematic System' (1987), 325), but it is dated to MN I IIIB by Evans (Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1930), vol. 3, 32).

39. Graham, Palaces of Crete (1987), 36; Levi, 'Recent Excavations at Phaistos' (1965), 4; Shaw, 'Minoan Architecture' (1971), 222-3.

40. Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1936), vol. 4, 61ff.

41. Hood, 'Religion in Bronze Age Crete'

(1996).

42. Branigan, 'Observations on State Formation in Crete' (1988), 65-6.

43. van Effenterre, 'Function of Monumentality in the Minoan Palaces' (1987), 85-7.

44. As detailed in Day, 'A Petrographic Approach' (1991), 2 vols.

45. As noted in Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983), 88.

46. Platon, Zakros (1985), 85-91.

47. An idea put forward with regard to Europe by Woolf 'Beyond Romans and Natives' (1997), 339-50.

48. Dickinson, *Aegean Bronze Age* (1994), 258.

49. Hitchcock, 'Art and Ethnicity in Minoan Crete' (1997).

50. For more detail, see, for example, Rutkowski, *Petsophas* (1991); and Watrous, 'Cave Sanctuary of Zeus' (1996).

Chapter 4. The Second Palace Period

1. See Hitchcock, *Minoan Architecture* (forthcoming) for a new assessment.

2. See Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983), 83-106, for a complete discussion.

3. Shaw, 'Evidence for the Minoan Tripartite Shrine' (1978), 438.

4. Marinatos, *Minoan Religion* (1993), 154-5- 5. Evans, 'The Palace of Knossos' (1900-), 15-16.

6. The evidence, various arguments for reconstruction, and further bibliography can be found in Niemeier, 'The "Priest King" Fresco' (1988), 235-44.

7. For a detailed discussion of the Master Impression, see Hallager, 'The Master Impression' (1985); for a more recent treatment, see Strasser, 'Horns of Consecration' (1997), 201-7-

8. For a postmodern critique of the Priest King and its reconstructions, see Hitchcock, 'It's a Drag to be a King' (1999).

9. Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983); see also Badawy, *Ancient Egyptian Architectural Design* (1965) for a detailed analysis.

to. Exceptions might be found at Ayia Photia, Petras, and the east terrace walls at Knossos. Whether these were used for defence or served other functions such as terraces remains an open question.

it. See Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983) for a complete study of Minoan planning methods and design principles.

12. See Ialbherr et al., 'I laghia Triadha' (1977), 14-296.

13. By Ialbherr, 'Scoperti Ad II aghia Triadha' (1903), 6-74.

14. Watrous, *Ayia Triadha*' (1984); or the view favoured by Cadogan, *Palaces of Minoan Crete* (1976), 104-9 and Graham, *Palaces of Crete* (1987), 49-51.

15. LaRosa, 'Preliminary Considerations' (1985), 45-54; Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design*

(1983), 77-8.

16. McEnroe, 'Minoan House and Town Arrangement' (1979).

17. Watrous, 'Ayia Triadha' (1984), 123-34.

18. Hitchcock and Preziosi, 'Knossos Unexplored Mansion' (1997), 51-62.

19. Hagia Triadha B measures c.22.5 m east-west x 18 m north-south; the 'Unexplored Mansion' at Knossos measures 24 X 14.5 m; and Tylissos House B measures 22 X 15.8 M.

20. Watrous, 'Ayia Triadha' (1984), 123-34.

21. Palyvou, 'Circulatory Patterns' (1987), 199•

22. Halbherr et al., 'Hagia Triadha' (1977), 14-296.

23. Immerwahr, 'Aegean Painting' (1989), 101-2, 10q. More recently see Rehak, 'Role of Religious Painting' (1997) + 163-75.

24. As discussed by Kopaka, 'Des pieces de repos' (1990), 217-30.

25. A detailed discussion of Minoan dress maybe found in Rehak, 'Aegean Breechcloths' (1996), 35-51; and of textiles in Barber, 'Prehistoric Textiles' (1991), 311-57•

26. See Iallager and Hallager, 'Knossian B.11' (1995), 547-56.

27. Younger, 'Bronze Age Representations'

(1995),507-46;see the discussion ofthe Hallagers'
1995 paper on p. 558.

28. Hood, Arts in Prehistoric Greece (1978), 145.

29. For various interpretations see: Hood, Arts in Prehistoric Greece (1978),144-6; Higgins, Minoan and Mycenaean Art (1981), 154; Forsdyke, 'I larvester Vase' (1954); Warren, Minoan Stone Vases (1969),176-this text is useful for a general introduction to the subject of Minoan stone vases.

30. For example, Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia (1977),120ff; Postgate, Early Mesopotamia (1992),16ff.

31. See Palaima, 'Maritime Matters' (1990),308.

32. Rehak, 'Ritual Destruction' (1994), i-6; 'Use and Destruction of Minoan Bull's Head Rhyta' (1995) 435-60.

33. Kochi, Aegean Rhyta' (1981),179-87.

34• Betancourt, 'Ghyali Obsidian' (1997),171-6.

35• Ibid.,174, n.37 and 46.

36. Preziosi, Minoan Architectural Design (1983), 144.

37. Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1930), vol. 3, 404.

38. Halbherr et al., 'Haghia Triadha' (1977),124.

39. Shaw, 'Minoan Architecture' (1971),11-12.

40. Ibid., 24-7.

41. Sakellerakis, 'Zominthos' (1988), 165-72.

42. McEnroe, 'Local Styles' (1990), 195-202.

43•Ibid., 195.

44. Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983).

45. See Davaras, *Architectural Elements* (1985), 77-92; 'Makrygialos' (1992), 172-4; and 'Cult Villa' (1997), 117-35 •

46. These observations are indebted to Strasser, 'The Blue Monkeys' (1996).

47. For example, Cummer, 'Itinerant Aegean Builders' (1980), 3-7; Schofield, 'Western Cyclades' (1982), 45-8.

48. Hitchcock and Preziosi, 'Function and Meaning'; see also Driessen's discussion (Driessen, 'Minoan Hall' (1982), 27-92) of the programmatic introduction of the Minoan hall, and the decreasing use of flustral basins over time.

49. Michailidou, 'Room with the Column' (1987)•

50. Hitchcock, *Blending the Local with the Foreign* (1998), 169-14.

51. Hitchcock, 'Best Laid Plans' (1997c), 243-50.

52. See Shaw, 'Excavations at Kommos' (1994), 305-6; Davaras, 'Cult-Villa' (1997), 117-35; Tsipopoulou and Papacostopoulou, 'Villas' and Villages' (1997), 203-14; Sakellarakis, 'Zominthos' (1988), 165-72.

53• Hatzaki, 'Little Palace at Knossos' (1996), 34-45.

54. McEnroe, 'Local Styles' (1990), 195-202; Hitchcock, 'Best Laid Plans' (1997c), 243-50; Yiannouli, Reason in Architecture (1992).

55. See C. Palyvou's seminal study of the architecture of Akrotiri, Akrotiri Thiros' (1988).

56. Cadogan, 'Probable Shrine' (1981), 169-71; Graham, Palaces of Crete (1987), fig. 31; Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1930), vol. 3, 354ff; Hitchcock, 'Minoan Hall System' (1994), 14-43.

57. Yiannouli, 'Reason in Architecture' (1992), 155-

58. McEnroe, 'Minoan House and Town Arrangement' (1979).

59. Cummer and Schofield, Keos 111 (1984), 40.

60. Cameron, 'General Study of Minoan Frescoes' (1975), 217.

61. Shaw, 'Minoan Architecture' (1971), 126-8.

62. Evans, 'Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult' (1901); Gesell, 'Town, Palace, and House Cult' (1985); Begg, 'Continuity' (1987); Marinatos, 'Public Festivals in the West Courts' (1987), 135-43.

63. Loeta Tyree, pers. comm.; Hogarth, 'Dictaeon Cave' (1899-1901), 94-116.

64. Hitchcock, 'Minoan Hall' (1994), 14-43.

65. See Abramovitz, 'Frescoes' Part I (1973), 284-300; 'Frescoes' Part II (1980), 57-85.

66. Cameron, 'Minoan Frescoes' (1975), 225.

67. Cummer and Schofield, Keos 111(1984), 41.

68. More recently, MacDonald and Driessen 'Drainage System' (1988), and 'Storm Drains' (1990), have suggested that the toilet at Knossos was some sort of preparation room, citing structural difficulties in actually flushing solid waste.

69. Georgiou, 'Minoan Coarse Wares' (1983), 75-92.

70. See Davis, 'Cultural Innovation' (1984), 159-66.

71. See the collection of papers in Hagg and Marinatos (eds), Minoan Thalassocracy (1984).

72. For example, by Wiener, 'Conical cups' (1984), 17-26; Schofield, 'Minoan colonists' (1984), 45-8.

73. See J. Caskey, 'Investigations in Keos, 1963' (1964), 326ff

74. Ibid.

75. For a discussion of the Knossian Procession fresco, see Immerwahr, Aegean Painting (1989), 89; Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1928), vol. 2, 704-12; Marinatos, Minoan Religion (1993), 65-6. For the Akrotiri Procession fresco, see Doumas, Wall Paintings (1992), figs 109 and 113.

76. Verlinden, 'Statuettes anthropomorphes crétoises' (1984), 83ff, has categorized six different distinctive gestures in the Neopalatial period, and a provisional attempt at their interpretation has been made in

Hitchcock, 'Engendering Domination' (1997a), 113-30. The gesture under discussion here is Verlinden's 'Gesture 3'.

77. M. Caskey, *Keos* 11 (1986), 36.

78. Bittel, *Hattusha* (1970), 9off

79. CMS (*Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*) II, no. 3, is an isolated figure not discussed here.

80. CMS I, no. 99, and Nilsson, *Minoan Mycenaean Religion* (1968), fig. 134.

81. CMS I, no. 126.

82. Aspects of these religious symbols are detailed in Evans, 'Tree and Pillar Cult' (1901) and Warren, 'Of Baetyls' (1990), 193-206.

83. For a different point of view, see Niemeier, 'Cult scenes on gold' (1990), 169.

84. Rehak, 'Use and Destruction of Minoan Bull's Head Rhvta' (1995), 435-60.

85. M. Caskey, *Keos* 11 (1986).

86. J. Caskey, 'Investigations in Keos, 1963' (1964), 327-8.

87. M. Caskey, *Keos* 11 (1986), 99.

88. See Lembessi and Muhly, 'Aspects of Minoan Cult' (1990), 315-36. For a discussion of Kato Syme in relationship to other sanctuaries outside the urban sphere see Watrous, 'Cave Sanctuary at Psychro'

(1996), 65-70.

89. Shaw, 'Minoan Tripartite Shrine' (1978), 429-48.

90. Lembessi and Muhly, 'Aspects of Minoan Cult' (1990), 334-5. See also Peatfield (1987)-

91. Hitchcock, 'Engendering Domination' (1997a).

92. See Frankfort, Art and Architecture 0980, 45-

93. Detailed in Lembessi and Muhly, 'Aspects of Minoan Cult' (1990), fig. 14.

94. Verlinden, 'Statuettes anthropomorphes cretoises' (1984).

95. For a discussion of the seal and its authenticity see Pini, 'Einige Falle' (1978), 142-5 and Betts, 'Possible Minoan Forgery' (1965) and 'Some Early Forgeries' (1978), 18, n. 4. See also Evans, Palace of Minos at Knossos (1936), vol. 4, 467, and Marinatos, Art and Religion (1984), 61-2.

96. See MacGillivray et al., 'Excavations at Palaikastro, 1987' (1988), 267, and 'Excavations at Palaikastro, 1988' (1989), 426-7.

97. Detailed in Sackett and MacGillivray, 'Boyhood of a God' (1989), 26-31.

98. This is detailed in McCallum, 'Megaron Frescoes' (1987); see also Marinatos, Minoan Religion (1993), 106-9; and Niemeier, 'Throne Room' (1987), 163-8.

99. See tablets Na58; Ta711; La622; Uno3 discussed in Ventris and Chadwick, Documents in Mycenaean Greek (1956); on to-no see *ibid.*, Ta7o7.

too. For the Sumerian king list, see Kramer, Sumerians (1963), 328-31.

tol. Discussed in Marinatos, Minoan Religion (1993), u5.

102. See also Hogarth, 'Dictaeon Cave' (1899-1901); Boardman, Cretan Collection (1961); and most recently, Watrous, 'Cave Sanctuary at Psychro' (1996). Much of the description of the cave and its features is summarized from Watrous which should be consulted by those seeking further information and bibliography.

103. Tyree, pers. comm. and Hogarth, 'Dictaeon Cave' (1899-1901).

104. See also Evans, 'Tree and Pillar Cult' (1901); Gesell, 'Town, Palace and House Cult' (1985); Begg, 'West Wing at Knossos' (1987); Marinatos, 'Public Festivals' (1987) and Minoan Religion (1993), 98-8.

105. For example, at Tyllissos A, South House at Knossos, and Little Palace at Knossos.

106. See Marinatos, Minoan Religion (1993), 97, where she very attractively compares the movement between lower floor and upper floor with an actual ritual in the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh.

107. Discussed in Watrous, 'Cave Sanctuary at Psychro' (1996), esp. 69. However, Watrous remains more cautious and does not draw out his conclusions to the same extent as Marinatos.

108. For example, at Hagia Triadha A as discussed above.

109. Younger, 'Stelai of Mycenaean Graves' (1997),

- i. Blegen and Rawson, *Palace of Nestor at Pylos* 1 (1966) and *Guide to the Palace of Nestor* (x967).
2. For example, see Darque, 'Pour l'abandon du terme "megaron" ' (1990), 21-31; Preziosi, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983), 175-93; and Schaar, 'Aegean house form' (1990), 173-82.
3. For a history of the decipherment see Chadwick, *Decipherment of Linear B* (1958).
4. As detailed in Palaima and Wright, 'Ins and Outs of the Archives Rooms at Pylos' (1985), 251-62.
5. Hirsch, 'Painted Decoration on the Floors' (1977), esp. 47-8; Hitchcock, 'Space, the Final Frontier' (1997), 46-53.
6. See Ventris and Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (1956) for wanax: Na58; Ta711; La622; Uno3, and for to-no, see Ta707. See also E. Cook, *The Worlds of Homer*, (forthcoming).
7. Much of the following discussion is summarized from McCallum, 'Decorative Program in the Mycenaean Palace of Pylos' (1987).
8. See T113 16.
9. Shclmerdine, 'Perfume Industry of Mycenaean Pylos' (1985).
10. Mycenaean re-wo-to-wo-ko-wo or bath-pourer becomes Homeric *Loetroxoos*. See Od. XX.297 and

tablets Ab27, Ad676, Tn996 in Ventris and Chadwick (1956).

it. Hitchcock,'Fabricating Signification' (1998),179-88.

12. Blegen and Rawson, Palace of Nestor at Pylos 1(1966), 256-7.

13. Possible reasons for the decline of Neopalatial Crete are detailed in Driessen and MacDonald, Troubled Leland (1997).

14. Nicgorsky, Iconography of the Herakles Knot (1995); see also Evans, Palace of Minos (1928a), vol. 11, 282ff, 430-5.

15. Evans, Palace of Minos (1930), vol. III, tuff; for the Knossos frescoes in general and the Taureador fresco in particular, see also Cameron,'The "Palatial" Thematic System' (1987),320-8, esp. 325.

16. For these different views see Younger, 'Bronze Age Representations'(1976),125-37; Younger,'Bronze Age Representations, 111' (1995a), 507-46; Evans,'On a Minoan Bronze Group' (1921), 247-59; Graham,'The Central Court' (1957), 255-62; Hitchcock,'Fabricating Signification' (1998),189-98.

17. Marinatos, Minoan Religion (1993), 219-20, 260, n. 162; also Hitchcock,'It's a Drag to be a King'(1999).

i8. See esp. Collon,'Bull -Leaping In Syria' (1994), 81-5; also Hitchcock,'Fabricating Signification' (1998),195.

19. Preziosi, Minoan Architectural Design (1983),175-93-

20. Shaw, 'Excavations at Kommoo' (1986), 21g-69.
21. See also Hayden, 'Late Bronze Age Tylissos' (1984), 37.46.
22. Detailed in McEnroe, 'Minoan House and Town Arrangement' (1979), 277-8; see also Shaw, 'Minoan Architecture' (1971), esp. 113-15.
23. Nilson, 'Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology' (1972); Marinatos, 'Minoan Religion' (1993).
24. Levi, 'La Tomba A Tholos' (1861-2), 7-x48, esp. 126-7; Marinatos, 'Minoan Religion' (1993), 20-r; Schoep, 'Home Sweet Home' (1994), 189-210, esp. 191-2, 209-10.
25. For a detailed discussion of the cult centre, see Renfrew, 'Archaeology of Cult' (1985).
26. As detailed in Scoufopoulos, 'Mycenaean Citadels'.
27. See Pausanias, Book 11. 16,5.
28. See Protonotariou-Deilaki, 'About the Gate of Mycenae' (1965), 7-26.
29. See Sanders, 'Sea Peoples' (1985).
30. Some 18 scholars including Evans, the discoverer of Knossos, and Alan J. B. Wace who excavated at Mycenae.
- P. Gates, 'Rethinking the building history' (1985), 263-74; Laffineur, 'Grave Circle A at Mycenae' (1990), 20t-6; and Younger, 'Stelai of Mycenae Grave Circles' (1997), 225-39.
32. Wright and Dabney, 'Mortuary Customs' (1990), S2.

i. The following discussion is based on Collon, 'Bull-Leaping in Syria' (1994).

2. The painstaking work that led to Ulu Burun giving up its secrets is vividly recounted in

Bass, 'Oldest Known Shipwreck' (1987), while the identity of the traders is discussed in Bass, 'Prolegomena to a Study of Maritime Traffic' (1997).

3. As discussed in Crowley, 'Aegean and the East' (1989).

4. For a detailed discussion of orientalism, see Said, 'Orientalism' (1978).

5. For example, Gates, 'Mycenean Art for a Levantine Market?' (1992).

6. For a discussion of faience in the Aegean, see Pollinger-Foster, 'Aegean Faience' (1979).

7. As detailed in Collon, 'Smiting God' (1972).

8. See also Hult, 'Bronze Age Ashlar Masonry' (1983), 9, 74.

9. As detailed in Dothan, 'Philistines' (1982), 94f

10. Detailed in Drews, 'Coming of the Greeks' (1988) and 'End of the Bronze Age' (1993); see also Sanders, 'Sea Peoples' (1985) and Wood, 'In Search of the Trojan War' (1985).

11. On Philistine origins see Dothan, Philistines (1982), 21-2. For biblical references to Caphtor, see Zeph. 2:5; Ezek. 25:16; Amos 9:7; Jeremiah 47:4.

12. See Dothan, Philistines (1982), 24. For biblical references see Samuel i and 2.

13. As discussed in Dothan, Philistines (198x), 63-6.

14. Marinatos, Minoan Religion (1993) presents a useful and informative account of Aegean religion in the Postpalatial Period; see also Gesell, 'Town, Palace, and House Cult' (1985), 41-55, for a discussion of Postpalatial religion; and Gesell and Saupe, 'Methods Used in the Construction of Ceramic Objects' (1997), for a detailed practical account of how these figures were constructed.

15. For a more detailed discussion of Near Eastern presentation scenes see Collon, First Impressions (1987).

16. See Caskey, Ayialrini, Kea' (1981) for further references.

17. See Ventris and Chadwick, Documents in Mycenaean Greek (1956), Xa o6 and Xa 1419.

IS. For a different view see Morris, Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art (1992).

19. As detailed in Langdon, 'Return of the Horse-Leader' (1989).

List of Illustrations

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i. Portrait of Sir Arthur Evans (1851-1941) surrounded by Minoan artefacts. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

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4. Workmen with pithos (storage jar) from the Minoan Palace at Phaistos. Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene.

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42. Aerial view of the fortified building at Ayia Photia, Middle Minoan IA. Copyright © Professor J. Wilson-Myers.

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52. Dolphin fresco from 'Queen's megaron' in the east wing of the Palace at Knossos,

Neopalatial Period. Copyright © Ancient Art and Architecture Collection.

S3• Pier-and-door partition system or polythyron (multiple doorway).

54• Grandstand fresco, palace at Knossos, Second Palace Period.

55A. 'Mother of the Mountains' sealing. Archeological Receipts Fund (TAP).

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56. 'Priest-King' fresco and new reconstruction, Palace of Knossos, Second Palace Period. 56A: copyright © Ancient Art and Architecture Collection;

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57. Plan of the Second Palace of Phaistos. Preziosi, D., Minoan Architectural Design (Mouton, 1983)-

58. Central planning grid of the Second Palace of Phaistos. Preziosi, D., Minoan Architectural Design (Mouton, 1983)-

59• Grand Staircase of the Second Palace of Phaistos.

60. Floral-style jug with a naturalistic rendering of wild grasses. Second Palace of Phaistos, Late Minoan IB, height 29 cm.

61A. Minoan stirrup jar with octopus from Gournia, east Crete, Late Minoan IB. Copyright © Ancient Art and Architecture Collection

61B. Postpalatial stirrup jar with octopus from a tomb at Tourloti, east Crete, LM IIIC.

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72. 'Boxer' rhyton, Haghia Triadha Villa A, steatite or
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73. The 'Harvester' vase, HaghiaTriadha Villa A.
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The publisher and authors apologize for any omissions or inaccuracies in the above list. If contacted, they will be pleased to rectify these at the earliest opportunity.

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Note: The following abbreviations have been used:

AE-L'Année épigraphique; Aegaeum-

Aegeum. • Annales d'archéologie égyptienne de l'Un-

iversité de Liège et UT-PASP: AfA- American

Journal of Archaeology; Anuario- Annuario della

Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni in

Oriente; BCH-Bulletin de correspondance hellénique;

BSA Annual of the British School at Athens; CMS-

Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel;

Hesperia - Hesperia: Journal of the American School

of Classical Studies at Athens; JHS Journal of

Hellenic Studies; JMA Journal of Mediterranean

Archaeology; OJA-Oxford Journal of Archaeology;

Op. Alb.-Opuscula Atheniensia; SIAM-Studies in

Mediterranean Archaeology.

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	Egypt	Crete	Cyclades	Mainland Greece
3000 BCE	OLD KINGDOM	PREPALATIAL (EM I–III) Houses: Vasiliki, Myrtos <i>Tholoi</i> : Mesara	EARLY CYCLADIC 'Frying pans' Marble figurines	EARLY HELLADIC House of the Tiles, Lerna
2000 BCE	MIDDLE KINGDOM Twelfth Dynasty 1991–1786 BCE Imported MM II pottery Hyksos invasion (?)	PROTOPALATIAL (MM I–II) Old Palaces: Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia Kamare ware Destruction of Old Palaces by earthquake (MM II/III)	MIDDLE CYCLADIC Minoan trade and settlements Settlement at Akrotiri on Thera	MIDDLE HELLADIC Arrival of Greeks (?) Minoan pottery
1700 BCE	SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD Hyksos rule Tell el-Dab'a frescoes (?)	NEOPALATIAL (MM IIIA–B) New Palaces at Knossos and Phaistos begun Palatial style villas	Neopalatial building programme At Akrotiri on Thera	Grave Circle B, Mycenae
1600 BCE	NEW KINGDOM Eighteenth Dynasty 1570 BCE	LATE MINOAN (LM IA) Palace at Knossos rebuilt after earthquake	LATE CYCLADIC Height of Minoan influence Houses with paintings Thera volcano erupts	LATE HELLADIC I Grave Circle A, Mycenae
1500 BCE	<i>Keftiu</i> representations on Theban tombs	LATE MINOAN (LM IB) Floral/marine-style pottery		LATE HELLADIC II <i>Tholos</i> tombs
1450 BCE		Destruction of Minoan sites LATE MINOAN (LM II) Mycenaeans at Knossos (?) Warrior graves Palace style Late frescoes		LATE HELLADIC IIB
1400 BCE		LATE MINOAN (LM IIIA)	Mycenaeans in control	LATE HELLADIC IIIA Mycenaean palaces Expansion of Mycenaean trade to Levant
1375 BCE		Destruction of palace at Knossos, 1375 BCE Reoccupation of palace		
1300 BCE	Nineteenth Dynasty First raid of Sea Peoples	LATE MINOAN (LM IIIB)		LATE HELLADIC IIIB Fortification of citadels Great age of Mycenaean palaces and frescoes Burning of palaces
1200 BCE	Rameses III (1198–1166 BCE) Defeat of Sea Peoples	LATE MINOAN (LM IIIC)	Mycenaean diaspora	LATE HELLADIC IIIC Continued reoccupation of sites

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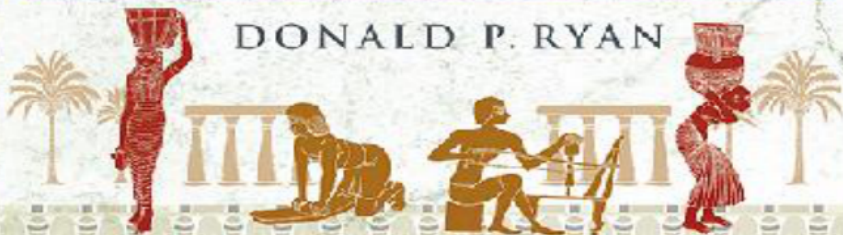
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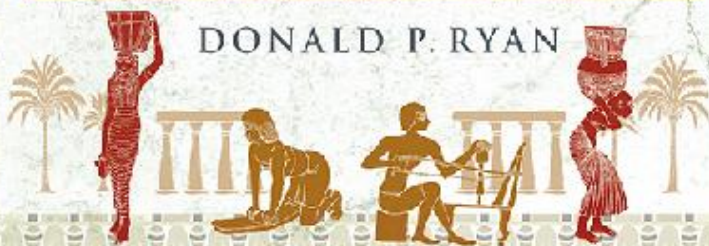
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lived a life of joy and generosity.*

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the intriguing peoples of the ancient past, the Egyptians seem to hold a special allure for the modern world. Ruined monuments covered with a fascinating script, massive temples and pyramids, and incredible archaeological discoveries all add to the mystique surrounding a truly old and mostly vanished society.

Compared to ancient Greece and Rome, two of the other great civilizations of the ancient world, Egypt has not left us with a vast and diverse array of surviving texts that give us insights into almost anything that might interest us. The average Egyptian was illiterate and the majority of the surviving texts relate to things royal, religious and funerary. Still, enough bits and pieces have come down to us to allow Egyptologists to paint a reasonable portrait of its culture in its many facets, including a scattering of private letters and treatises about topics such as medicine. The practice of painting or sculpting scenes of daily life on the walls of the tombs of the elite – visions of an afterlife in a perfected version of the world they lived in while alive – have greatly benefited scholars. So, too, has the custom of equipping such tombs with actual food, clothing, furniture and other provisions.

A few abandoned villages have also survived. Although established in order to facilitate building projects such as the construction of pyramids and royal tombs, they were situated in arid places away from the Nile's banks and thus avoided obliteration by the cyclical flooding of the river. Excavations of these sites have offered us precious and valuable clues to help us understand ancient Egyptian ways of life.

The ancient Egyptians divided their day, measured from sunset to sunset, into twelve hours of the day and twelve hours of the night. (For the convenience of the reader, the modern convention of measuring a day as starting at midnight will be used.) In this book we will see what one of these days in the life of ancient Egypt was like, getting a glimpse into this vanished civilization through the eyes and experiences of twenty-four of its inhabitants, from the hard-working farmers, potters, weavers and soldiers at its core, to the divine ruler of Egypt himself with his complex entourage of bureaucrats. Each hour we will meet a different Egyptian, their lives, struggles and triumphs

being of interest not only as vehicles for understanding what daily life might have been like for them, but also for what they can tell us about Egypt itself. Most of the characters and scenarios in each chapter are fictional but are underpinned by Egyptological knowledge, the intent being to provide slices of life in ancient Egypt in a realistic and, hopefully, entertaining fashion. A few, though, take their place in history including the ruler, Amenhotep II, his queen, Tiaa, and his vizier, Amenemopet.

The majority of Egyptians led relatively simple lives and loved their land, believing it to be the best place on earth. They called it *Kemet*, ‘the Black Land,’ referring to the rich fertile soil along the banks of its vital river, which snaked north from distant lands to the south, and ultimately emptied out into a great sea. The sinewy Nile Valley in the south and the broad Delta in the north provided a natural division of *Kemet* into two lands, Upper and Lower Egypt respectively, as they were clearly distinguished. At one time, the regions were politically separate, but their unification under a single ruler was considered to be the beginning of Egyptian civilization, and the ruler was well noted as the king of both lands.

The English word ‘Egypt’ is derived from the Greek word, *Aigypptos*, which seems to be derived from the ancient Egyptian word, *Hut-ka-Ptah*, meaning ‘Mansion of the Ka (spirit) of Ptah’. The popular god, Ptah, was associated with the ancient capital of Memphis and was a patron of craftsmen.

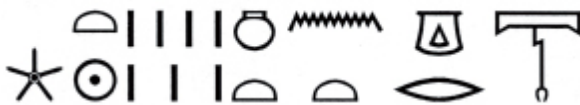
The Nile River really was at the core of Egypt’s existence. Its yearly period of flooding deposited rich, fertile silt that renewed the farmers’ productive fields. Its water provided a highway north and south, lots of fish to eat, water for irrigation and plenty of mud to make bricks. Off to the edges was the Red Land, the land of desert and arid mountains – lots of sand and stone, a number of gold mines and the occasional oasis.

Other than the river, the most dominant part of the Egyptian world was the sun, that orange ball that provided heat and light, which descended into the west each evening to be reborn each and every day – or so it was fervently hoped. The sun was the god *Re*, traversing the sky in a boat loaded with other gods, or perhaps it was propelled by a giant cosmic dung beetle, or engaged in a slow flight with the invisible wings of a divine hawk. In the Egyptian mindset, all of these things could be true at the same time.

Although the sun was dominant in Egypt’s physical world, the perceived presence of gods was everywhere – and they represented both the physical and the abstract. The gods numbered in the hundreds, with temples and shrines of various sizes peppering the landscape. They all had their start long before the beginnings of Egyptian civilization when a creator god, *Atum*, arose from a mound of slime emerging from the primordial waters of *Nun*. *Atum*, himself, proceeded to create pairs of other gods, male and female, who played major roles in the creation and maintenance of a new world. *Geb* and *Nut* were the land and the sky; *Shu* and *Tefnut* were air and moisture, and

together they comprised the basic components of a liveable environment. Of supreme importance at the time this book is set was the god Amun-Re, who was honoured by temples proliferating on the east bank of the river, and who was given credit for much of Kemet's success.

Our twenty-four stories will take place in Thebes, a political and religious capital, during year twelve of the reign of Aakheperure Amenhotep (Amenhotep II), *c.* 1414 BC, during the Eighteenth Dynasty of the chronological period that scholars have named the New Kingdom (*c.* 1550 to 1069 BC). The New Kingdom was a time of Egypt's empire building, with its eastern influence reaching to the edge of Mesopotamia and its southern dominance deep into Nubia. It was a time of growing prosperity, with Egypt's rulers initiating both military and commercial foreign expeditions of impressive proportions. Amenhotep II bragged about his superior skills as an athlete and warrior, leading his troops into battle in a chariot pulled by brawny prancing horses. Back at home he was a great builder of temples, palaces and, of course, many monuments to himself. The New Kingdom was certainly an interesting time in human history, and arguably the apogee of Egypt's ancient civilization and, as the following chapters will show, an ideal era to serve as an introduction to ancient Egyptian culture. Let's take a trip back in time to Kemet and spend a day with the people who lived there.



7TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(00.00–01.00)

THE MIDWIFE DELIVERS A BABY

May you die, he who comes out of the dark, who creeps in with his nose behind him, his head averted (so as not to be seen). May he fail at his task. May you die, she who comes out of the dark, who creeps in, her nose behind her, her head averted (so as not to be seen). May she fail at her task. Did you come to kiss this child? I will not let you kiss him. Have you come to silence him? I will not let you silence him! Have you come to harm him? I will not let you harm him! Have you come to take him? I will not let you take him from me! I have provided his protection against you!

MAGICAL SPELL FOR THE PROTECTION OF A BABY

Babies can come at any time of the day or night, and Weret has made Merit aware of this at least half a dozen times. Merit's labour pains had started while still daylight and now, hours into darkness, the moment of delivery is imminent. Weret, her aunt, who is serving the role of a midwife, is there to assist in the process, fervently coaching her patient and reciting incantations as Merit squats over several bricks in a room barely lit by a trio of oil lamps.

Along with her advice and spells, the midwife has brought along a couple of small statuettes, neither of which are, by anyone's standards, particularly attractive. The god Bes is absolutely hideous; nevertheless, he is there to help. Depicted as a short, pudgy, ugly dwarf, his tongue fully exposed and striking an obnoxious pose, he could, it is believed, ward off evil forces during pregnancy and childbirth. The other statuette, the fertility goddess Heqet, is represented as a frog and has similar powers, and is no doubt happy with the

proceedings. She has been prominently displayed in the home ever since Merit intently desired to be pregnant yet again. Heqet's inclusion made a lot of sense: frogs do produce a great number of eggs and tadpoles, but they don't snore, as Merit's husband, Manu, is doing in the adjacent room after a hard day's fishing.

The rather ugly but strong and fierce god Bes was a favourite as a protector of Egyptian households. Squat, with a mix of human and lion-like features, he was thought to drive out evil spirits. Unlike much Egyptian art, he was often portrayed with his body fully facing forward, a posture that displays his frightening features to full effect.



THE GOD BES, A PROTECTOR OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Weret places both of the images in a position overlooking the birth to enhance their influence. Upon discovering that she was pregnant months previously, Merit had been given a necklace by her aunt featuring a string of blue amulets in the shape of Taweret. While Bes and Heqet are certainly unattractive, Taweret with her composite features is uglier still. With the general shape of a standing pregnant hippopotamus with the legs of a lion, and crocodilian features along her back, she is perhaps the fiercest of the three protective deities, with the ability, hopefully, of repelling any and all malicious forces.

Though repulsive, the trio of deities are comforting to those they watched over.

With an outcome of debatable accuracy, the ancient Egyptians had a kind of pregnancy test: wheat and barley would be placed into a cloth pouch and the woman, suspecting a baby was on the way, would urinate on it every day. If the barley sprouted it would be a boy, if the wheat sprouted it would be a girl, and if both appeared, it was a positive but undetermined outcome. If nothing sprouted, there was no pregnancy.

With years of experience, Weret continues to coach while a head begins to emerge between Merit's thighs. She knows that there is no guarantee that the child will be born alive nor that Merit will ultimately survive the experience. Within minutes, though, an Egyptian baby is born, its cries announcing its entry into the world. It is a boy and Weret knows that both Merit and her husband Manu will be relieved: the couple already have three girls. Although helpful with the never-ending daily chores, at some time those daughters will marry and depart to have their own households, leaving even more work for Merit.

But after just a few years, this new boy would be able to learn to fish with his father, which in turn would become his own career, and contribute to his family's well-being.

'Nefer,' mutters the baby's exhausted mother. 'Let's name him Nefer, the good or beautiful one.'

'Yet again,' thinks Weret as she passes the baby to its mother. There had already been two previous boys given that name but neither had survived more than a few months. Both were buried under the floor of their house. Perhaps this one would be different and would live many long and happy years, aided by several loving and helpful children of his own. And maybe those ugly protective gods would work their magic this time. 'Nefer,' the midwife says. 'It's a wonderful name but presumptuous – surely you're not expecting him to be both well behaved and attractive? Not likely when he smells of fish like his father! At least he won't be a brick-maker, I suppose.'

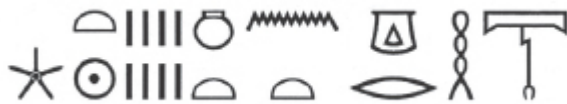
The average ancient Egyptian, if they survived birth and childhood, might live to be thirty to thirty-five years old. There were numerous ways to die including diseases, accidents during work, or fighting the enemy. Many relatively simple maladies, including numerous infections and illnesses that can be easily treated with modern medicine and vaccinations, could be absolutely fatal. Parasites and eye diseases, which could make one's life miserable, were not uncommon and evidence of various kinds of cancers is now being found in mummies.

Baby Nefer is arguably lucky to be born in Kemet, Weret thinks, what with its typically hospitable climate, and usual abundance of food, and a culture which provides, at least in theory, a tolerable life in the here and now, and one even better in the Afterlife. As an Egyptian, his culture is superior to those others

who lived outside the land, including the Libyans to the west, Nubians to the south and Asiatics to the east – inferior peoples who could only elevate themselves to true humanity by becoming Egyptians themselves. Nefer didn't have a bad deal, all things considered, thinks Weret.

The baby boy will be nursed for a few years by his mother, and perhaps occasionally by a relative or wet-nurse, though Weret hopes she would be spared that – she is busy enough as it is. There will be a few years of playing and running about with other children, all naked with heads shaved but for a long lock of hair on one side. But all too soon, he'll be segued into his father's profession, doing minor tasks at first, but then growing more adept until able to participate fully. Time will fly quickly as it seems to do and there will likely be a marriage and children, and the cycle would no doubt continue unabated for eons. Yes, a predictable – and often tough – life is in store for this little one, Weret thinks to herself, watching the baby squirm in his mother's arms – she just hopes he survives to live it.





8TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(01.00–02.00)

THE RULER LIES AWAKE

He has trampled the tribesmen under his sandals. The Dwellers of the North bow before his power and all foreign lands fear him ... the world is in his hands. Men are terrified of him, the gods are subject to his love, the one appointed by the god Amun himself ... He has seized the whole of the Black Land, Upper and Lower Egypt being subject to his plans.

THE GREAT SPHINX STELE OF AMENHOTEP II

Amenhotep lies on his back on his ornate bed, his head supported by a rest of solid ebony, his eyes wide open, staring upward in a fit of tortuous insomnia, his body aching from the day's physical activities. Amenhotep, or Aakheperure as he is also known, holds the most vital and onerous job ever: maintaining order in the universe. It's called *maat* – a harmonious balance of truth and stability – and to prevent the world from falling into chaos, and as the divine ruler, Amenhotep is expected to keep the forces of evil at bay and please the numerous capricious Egyptian gods who could readily turn on his people at any time.

Being ruler of Egypt has its benefits, of course. Considered to be a living manifestation of the solar falcon god Horus, he could pretty much enjoy the best of everything, and do whatever he pleased, but there is a cost to it. As a god, day after day he faces the highest of expectations of his people. There were numerous construction projects to accomplish all over the land – many dedicated to himself – all the while finding ways to build, if not maintain, Egypt's considerable wealth, which is no easy task. After all, he had not only inherited his legendary father's empire, he is also, according to his many

grandiose titles that are carved into stone on many monuments, ‘the Mighty Bull: Sharp of Horns, Powerful of Splendour, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Horus of Gold, Son of Re, Lord of Diadems, the Strong-Armed One, Likeness of Re, Son of Amun and Lord of All Foreign Lands’. He is the commander of Egypt’s military forces and the high priest to all of the gods – daunting responsibilities indeed!



**THE NAMES OF AAKHEPERURE AMENHOTEP (AMENHOTEP II) WRITTEN IN HIEROGLYPHS
AND ENCIRCLED IN CARTOUCHES**

The rulers of Egypt had several names and titles and there were two names in particular by which they were generally known, inscribed within elongated ovals that Egyptologists call ‘cartouches’. One is the birth name and the other is a name adopted upon becoming ruler.

These two names conveniently serve modern scholars given that there were, for example, four rulers named Amenhotep and eleven named Rameses. The second name allows them to be distinguished one from another: modern scholars tend to identify them with a number, for example, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II.

Amenhotep is the seventh king in his family’s line of rulers, a dynasty that began with the ouster of the foreigners known as the Hyksos several generations previously. From lands to the East, the Hyksos had ruled Egypt for about a hundred years until defeated by the humiliated Egyptians and chased from the land. The subsequent rulers of Egypt were not content to merely defend their borders, but aggressively conducted campaigns to subjugate, or at least terrify, their potential enemies on all sides. As a bonus to dominating foreigners, the fruits of empire-building have become obvious: lots of booty including livestock, captives and gold. And increasingly it is becoming clear that there are powers in the East who are themselves growing in strength, and who must be checked.

Amenhotep’s father, Thutmose, set a high standard for any ruler. His expertise in plundering and subjugation are hard to match and even harder to maintain. Thutmose, the third ruler bearing that name in the present dynasty, had brought the Egyptian army far to the east, all the way to the distant Euphrates river, with a lot of battles along the way. His long career included seventeen foreign military campaigns, the details of which are proudly inscribed in the Theban temple Thutmose had greatly expanded. Thutmose’s rise to the throne had been curious indeed.

Amenhotep’s grandfather, the second Thutmose, had died after only about a dozen years of reign, the heir-apparent being a mere child. While still technically the ruler, the inherited role of the third Thutmose had been

essentially usurped by his stepmother, Hatshepsut, who after a few years of acting behind the scenes, came out and declared herself ruler. Despite this unprecedented situation of a woman ruling Egypt, her reign was quite successful, with expeditions to exotic lands to the south and incredible building projects. With her death, the third Thutmose was more than ready to rule on his own and did so for over thirty years. Later on in his reign, though, he initiated an active campaign to erase the memory of Hatshepsut, defacing her name and likeness from her monuments and demolishing her statues. There had been rumours that this was payback for his being kept in the background as he had been technically the king during her entire reign. More likely, it was to expunge the precedence of a woman serving as ruler of Kemet. Egypt is a land of long-standing traditions, and the order is not to be upset.

Not surprisingly, Amenhotep's father hadn't talked much about Hatshepsut while he groomed his oldest son, Amenemhat, to succeed him. Sadly, the prince died, and Amenhotep was next in line. Thutmose, though, was able to mentor the future ruler as the two served as co-regents for a couple of years before Thutmose's own death, a death that transformed him into Osiris, the ruler of the underworld of the dead. Amenhotep in turn became the living manifestation of Horus, the son of Osiris.

The life of Thutmose III was dynamic like few others, and Amenhotep feels a nagging obligation to at least give the impression of approaching his achievements. He would need to live long and have much greater ambitions to come even close to matching the accomplishments of his father. The people expected success from their ruler; a demonstration of *maat* that gives them confidence in their world. Fortunately, Amenhotep is a superb athlete and while some might cynically consider his claims exaggerated, there is seemingly nothing beyond the abilities of their god-king.

Amenhotep rubs his aching shoulder. Maintaining a super-human reputation takes a physical toll and he occasionally questions his own divinity. Why should a god suffer such pains? The Egyptians see him as a great horseman, charioteer, rowing champion, runner and archer. They believe that he is capable of shooting arrows from a racing chariot through several thick ingots of copper, a feat recorded for the ages on a Theban temple wall. Surrounded by congratulating attendants, it's easy for Amenhotep to believe some of the grandiose hype.

Still, Amenhotep deeply feels the obligation to at least appear as powerful as his ingratiating titles proclaim him to be. Since becoming ruler twelve years previously, he has only conducted three foreign campaigns, his first initiated almost immediately after assuming the throne. With the news of Thutmose's death reaching the lands he had conquered, some of those under Egypt's dominance saw it as an opportunity to revolt, and their suppression was absolutely necessary in order to maintain and hopefully expand Egypt's hard-won empire. It was important to let the foreign lands know that Egypt

was still in control. Troublemakers needed to be suppressed, and those who remained loyal were rewarded.

The Good God, Strong of Might, who is successful in the presence of his army; whose arrows never fail. When he shoots ingots of copper, he splits them like the stems of papyrus ... the strong arm of whose like has never existed ... The large copper slab at which his majesty shot was three fingers thick. The Great of Strength pierced it with his many arrows, all penetrating three palms and emerging behind the slab ... It was in the presence of the entire land that His Majesty performed this.

TEXT ACCOMPANYING A DEPICTION OF AMENHOTEP II SHOOTING ARROWS AT A TARGET FROM A SPEEDING CHARIOT, FROM THE THIRD PYLON IN THE KARNAK TEMPLE, THEBES

After that first campaign came two more in years seven and nine of his reign. The fear of Kemet had once again been instilled in those who might consider rebellion. Dozens of cities and towns in Canaan and Syria had been raided and/or punished, and the booty acquired was truly impressive. Having a reputation as being particularly cruel certainly helped. As the supreme military commander, Amenhotep was on-site and directly involved, and his prowess on the battlefield, like his athletic achievements, were remarkable, at least as officially reported.

His majesty arrived at Memphis with a happy heart and as a mighty bull. The amount of this booty: 550 warriors of the Hurrian elite, 240 of their wives, 640 Canaanites, 232 children of the chieftains, 323 daughters of the chieftains, 270 concubines of the chieftains of all the foreign lands along with their adornments of silver, and gold on their arms. The Total: 2,214 captives, 820 horses, 730 chariots, including all their weapons of war.

THE MEMPHIS STELA OF AMENHOTEP II, PROVIDING A RECORD OF THE SECOND FOREIGN CAMPAIGN

The tired king's mind continues to race. Another typically big day lies ahead. There would be meetings with his right-hand man, the vizier Amenemopet, who would report to him all of concern throughout the land of Egypt and

beyond. There are building projects up and down the Nile, including the building of new temples and the maintenance of others. And there is the matter of planning for his own death with the construction of a tomb in the royal cemetery and a memorial temple where he will be worshipped for eons. His viceroy of Nubia, Usersatet, would be presenting plans and seeking authorization for various projects under his jurisdiction.

And, as is becoming routine, there would be a parade of visiting emissaries bringing tribute who would present wonderfully valuable and interesting things from far off-lands. He especially likes these occasions and looks forward to the bowing and scraping of the colourfully dressed foreigners, a sure sign of his nation's continuing dominance. Later he would dine with his wife, Tiaa, and enjoy the company of his several children. The food would be the best, as usual, as would be the wine. No desire would be withheld from the Powerful of Splendours.



THE PROFILE OF AMENHOTEP II AS DEPICTED ON A TEMPLE WALL AT KARNAK

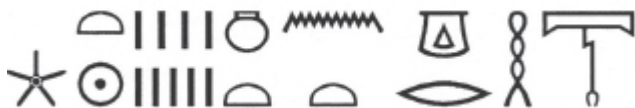
Regular introspection is good, Amenhotep concludes, although doing so at such hours of the night is not preferred. Although he respects, to some extent, the simplicity of the lives of the hard-working average Egyptians who toiled daily in their repetitive tasks, he certainly revels in the fact that while alive he is one of a kind. Yes, ultimately, it's good to be the king!

After hours of restlessness, the ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt finally drifts off, but not for long. Loud screeching accompanied by barking and the scuffle of several feet across the floor of the sleeping chamber put an end to that. The startling crash that follows alerts a couple of guards who pull back the chamber's curtains and rush in with a couple of lit lamps. What was once a beautifully crafted calcite standing vase is now in pieces. Apparently one of Amenhotep's de-fanged pet baboons, which are occasionally allowed to roam the palace, is being chased by one of his hunting dogs. Both of the guards

were appalled and apologetic, and when they attempted to clean up the mess, the king intervenes. 'Just leave it until after I get up tomorrow; I really need my sleep.' The guards backed off, while more screeching and the breaking of more things can be heard in the background.

'Some of my people make bricks all day and probably sleep better,' thinks Amenhotep, 'and there are probably few with misbehaving monkeys tormenting them at a late hour. But such is the life of the Strong Bull!'





9TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(02.00–03.00)

THE EMBALMER WORKS LATE

It has been an extremely long day for Hapuneseb but fortunately there are only a few more tasks remaining. Recently there has been more work than usual. A spate of construction accidents and other unexpected deaths kept the bodies coming in and several are due for burial in the next few days. But with deadlines to meet and clients to please Hapuneseb can't afford to pack up and go home for the night just yet.

He reaches deep into an incision cut in the lower left abdomen of a male corpse lying supine on the low embalming table. With his arm inserted up to his elbow, and a flint knife grasped in his hand, he jabs and slices. 'Bring me a bowl,' he orders Mahu, one of several of his assistants present, who stretches for a large pottery vessel. 'Bring it close, I'm going to retrieve his intestines.' Reaching again inside the corpse, Hapuneseb grabs a handful of guts, pulls out the slimy linear tubes and drops them into the bowl. 'Fill it with natron and bring me another.' This time, Hapuneseb would be going after the liver; then he would take on the stomach and finally the lungs. He wishes the incision were a little bigger. One of his colleagues had initiated the cut but then was chased out of the embalming house, where those passing by hurled both curses and stones at him. It is nothing personal; it's simply part of a ritual that rejects death and those who damaged a human body – which as everyone knows, should be inviolate. The embalmer who had made the slit would soon return and on occasion Hapuneseb himself would be forced to swiftly vacate the premises. It was an odd paradox of Hapuneseb's job that his work was both necessary and disdained.

Hapuneseb is a genuine expert at finding and cutting away the proper organs and retrieving them through such a small hole. The heart would be left in place – after all, it is the centre of one's being and intelligence – but all else had to go. The entrails would become a real foul, rotting issue if left in the

body, but still, they needed to be preserved with much of the rest of the deceased. It is messy, nasty but necessary work.

The Egyptians saw the heart as the core of one's physical self, intelligence and emotion. Its pulsations could be felt while alive and stopped at death. Its pace could be felt reacting to everything from fear to romance. The brain, on the other hand, just seemed to be a space-filler in one's skull – it had no obvious function and no religious importance, though long before the time of Amenhotep II, doctors had figured out that fracturing the skull in different ways would produce different symptoms of unconsciousness and paralysis that could be crippling or fatal.

The bowls of entrails are set aside and when sufficiently desiccated they will be put in separate limestone jars, each with a lid carved in the likeness of the four sons of Horus: Duamutef for the stomach, Hapi for the lungs, Imsety for the liver and Qebehsenuef for the intestines. The jars, bearing texts noting the name of the deceased, will be interred in the tomb as separate but vital parts of the mummy.

Now it is time to remove the brain. 'Would you like to give it a try?' Hapneseb asks Mahu. The assistant reaches for a couple of tools and approaches the head of the body. Inserting a piece of copper with a hook on its end into the nose of the deceased, he pounds through the fragile bones beyond until he reaches the soft substance behind. Swirling the hook around, he begins to break up the brain, liquefying it and pulling small chunks out through the nostrils. Hapneseb watches Mahu as he eventually checks that he can now feel the hard walls of the skull in all directions and helps him to flip the body over. Mahu slaps it repeatedly on the back of the head to drain a ghastly substance into a pile of sand on the floor.

'Let's wash him out, pack him and dry him, and we'll be done with him for a while.' Hapneseb shoves linen rags into the body through the incision and wipes it out as much as possible before putting the soiled cloths into a large white pot. He then rubs the body inside and out with oils and resins, and packs its void with some more rags, and inserts a few small ones in the nostrils. The incision in the side is closed with stitches and a small sheet of very thin gold. That being complete, the body is lifted on to a flat wooden tray in one corner of the room, where a large open jar awaits. Scoop after scoop of a white substance is removed from it and poured around, under and over the body until it is completely covered. This is natron, a product retrieved from a dry lakebed in the desert far to the northwest of Thebes. Its dehydrating properties are well known and essential for creating what is hoped to be a recognizable version of a once-living human. The normal process of mummification took seventy days, at which time the natron would be brushed away to reveal the end result.

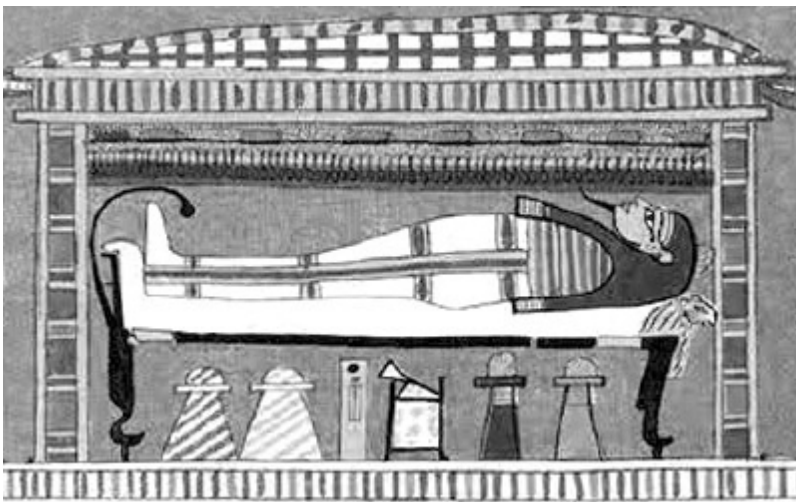
Natron is a naturally occurring substance found in dry lake beds and is composed mostly of sodium carbonate and bicarbonate. A large quantity of it was required for each mummy and there must have been caravan after caravan of donkeys going in and out of the desert loaded down with the material to provide the vast amounts required in the embalming industry.

Hapuneseb is proud of his work. If a body arrives at his workshop shortly after death, he has a better chance of an excellent outcome and the work would be less odiferous. It is sad that no one other than the colleagues with whom he works can actually know the quality of his work. The preserved body would be wrapped in layers of linen and placed in a coffin for eternity. At least, that would be the plan. The body's life force, though, its *ka*, would have a home, and its soul, or *ba*, would be able to leave the body and its tomb to flit about in the outside world and return at will.

The origins of mummification are somewhat obscure although it's possible that the idea was derived from viewing naturally desiccated bodies. Simple graves revealed by shifting sand in dry desert areas could have inspired the idea that the same thing could be produced artificially at will in a relatively short amount of time by using dehydrating agents such as natron. Recent discoveries show that in at least one prehistoric cemetery, the practice of wrapping the bodies and applying resin had already been introduced.

Hapuneseb glances around the large room. There are several embalming trays mounded with natron covering bodies in various stages of dehydration. After the drying process the corpse would be cleaned and wrapped in a process less nasty, but still elaborate. The body would be wrapped in strips and sheets of linen with each limb bound separately. Usually, a priest would recite spells during this process, making sure that the dead person would not only be physically preserved, but would be regenerated as a transformed and immortal being. Wearing a mask representing the jackal-headed patron god of embalming, Anubis, the priest would oversee the wrapping process making sure that magical amulets were placed in the proper position on the mummy. A ceramic scarab beetle might inspire resurrection and little likenesses of the four sons of Horus might also be included.

A large scarab made of stone, its flat side engraved with funerary texts, is perhaps the most important amulet of them all. It would be placed over the area of the deceased's heart in the event anything happened to the actual organ left in the body. The heart is essential for the deceased's judgment in the Netherworld during which it would be weighed on a scale against the feather of *maat* representing truth and justice. If all is successful, a splendid eternity would follow. To finish off the mummy's creation, a mask with human features would be fitted like a helmet over the mummy's wrapped head, giving a human appearance to what might otherwise look like a tightly wound bundle of linen.



THE MUMMY OF THE SCRIBE, ANI, AWAITS TRANSPORT TO HIS TOMB, COMPLETE WITH HIS ENTRAILS IN JARS AND A WRITING KIT

It was very late, but one particular individual, Ipi, has his funeral in a few short hours and his body simply had to be finished. Ipi had been a particularly difficult case from the very beginning. A little over two months previously, he fell off the top of a wall and landed on his head. Apparently, he wasn't noticed (or was ignored) and lay dead for several days and some suggested he had been pushed. It wasn't too much of a surprise: Ipi was one of the most unpopular people in Thebes. A friend of a friend of a relative of the ruler, he had been placed as an overseer and was considered very abusive. The story being told was that he was atop the wall, looking for a good place to bark orders from and make his usual threats, but then 'tripped'. Ipi's bad attitude wasn't only reserved for the workers; he was rude and arrogant to nearly everyone he met, and most of his family didn't seem to care for him either. Still, he had a wife who must have tolerated him somewhat. If there were children, they weren't admitting it.

The embalmers charge their syringes with cedar oil and therewith fill the belly of the dead man, making no cut, nor removing the intestines, but injecting it through his back-side orifice and checking it from returning; then they embalm the body for the appointed days; on the last day they let the oil which they poured in pass out again. It has so great power that it brings away the inner parts and intestines all dissolved; the flesh is eaten away by the natron and in the end nothing is left of the body but skin and bone.

HERODOTUS, *THE HISTORIES*, BOOK II, DESCRIBING ONE OF THE CHEAPER FORMS OF

Ipi no doubt had plans for a long life and a pleasant demise. In the last several years he had commissioned a tomb, complete with a courtyard, burial shaft and chapel, in an elite cemetery on a hillside on the western side of the river, not that far from the embalming workshop where he now lay. His body had been a real mess when it was delivered to Hapuneseb, with decay well underway and many broken bones, including the skull. Still, Hapuneseb has seen worse, and when he started working on Ipi he used plenty of the more pleasantly aromatic treatments. The incense already burning had had to be doubled.

Ipi's wife, Baketamun, had appeared not long after the body's delivery, standing a bit away from the embalming facility. She hadn't seemed particularly distressed and wished to discuss the costs. Hapuneseb had outlined the options. There was a truly deluxe form of mummification that would be quite costly. Only the best materials would be used, the wrapping would be of superb quality and there would be plenty of amulets made from precious stones. The mask would be magnificent and gilded in gold. It hadn't taken long for Baketamun to decline. 'Anything cheaper?'

'Yes,' answered Hapuneseb, 'we could use less expensive materials all around, ceramic amulets and a well-painted mask.'

'Anything cheaper?'

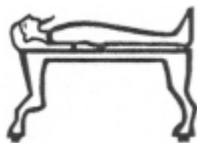
Hapuneseb had been taken a bit aback. 'You could always take him away, drag him out into the desert and bury him in a hole if you'd like to be that stingy!' he had said, losing patience. 'How about this? We'll do a simple but unembellished job. You can bring linen from your home for the wrapping materials. We'll throw in a few amulets and the mask will be very average.'

'Fine. Go ahead. Ipi deserves nothing better,' Baketamun had replied, showing little emotion.

The embalmers are certainly ready to get rid of Ipi and fortunately on that night there are just a couple of final tasks to do: put on his final wrappings and install his mask. The contracted lector priest went home a few hours before but the work, nonetheless, still needs to be finished, so Hapuneseb calls Mahu over to join him. 'Here, put this on!' he orders. The heavy mask of Anubis is lifted on to Mahu's head; far too big, it engulfs his shoulders and almost traps him. 'I can't see!' exclaims the boy, the eye holes located in the mask's neck being way out of place.

'Just wear it for a few minutes. You've heard the spells hundreds of times. Recite them while I secure the arms.' Mahu's muffled mutterings are nearly incomprehensible while Hapuneseb uses up the last of the linen brought by Ipi's wife. A few quick wraps and ties and Ipi's mask is installed on his

mummy. After Hapuneseb has helped Mahu remove the Anubis mask, the two considered their work. Given that it was a cheap job, the finished project isn't all that bad, although the boy starts giggling at the cheaply formed and painted mask. Baketamun probably won't care and, tired as they were, as the crew at the embalming workshop begin to walk home, they speculate about what sort of cheap coffin might arrive for Ipi in just a few short hours.





10TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(03.00–04.00)

THE OLD SOLDIER DREAMS OF BATTLE

His majesty went forth in a chariot of electrum, arrayed in his weapons of war, like Horus the Smiter, Lord of Power; like Montu of Thebes; while his father, Amun, strengthened his arms.

Annals of Thutmose III, Karnak

It has been a rough week as the wretched Asiatic enemy put up a good fight. Although the Egyptian forces have suffered more than a few losses, it is nothing compared to their foe, who are now being killed in great numbers – that is, the ones who haven't turned and run. There are no archers or foot-soldiers better than the Egyptians. Merimose is one of the latter and he thrives on each deadly contact made with the swing of his battle axe or curved sword, and he especially loves the occasions where he can fight with an enemy combatant hand-to-hand on the ground. Despite a few close calls, the wrestling always ends in a dead opponent.

The charioteers with their handsome horses are the fiercest and most intimidating of the Egyptian forces. Fast and deadly, they can wreak havoc with their mobile archers. And at the front of them all is the mighty Aakheperure Amenhotep in his gold-gilded chariot, inspiring all to claim victory as the pile of severed hands grows higher by the hour. This is a great way of making an accurate tally of the dead, as long as only one hand is cut off each corpse.

Yes, it is a great day for Merimose as he stands over one of the fallen to search the body for anything of value before cutting off an appendage. With his concentration distracted, he isn't ready for what happens next. One of the battlefield 'dead' scrambles to his feet, flips Merimose over and slams him on

his back, ready to deliver a fatal stab with his dagger.

Merimose wakes up with a start, his dream having been interrupted by his falling off the low brick bench that serves as his sleeping platform. It isn't the first time he has experienced battle in his sleep; it is a regular occurrence. Now well over sixty years of age, he had spent more than two decades as a soldier accompanying his king on battles that provided a wealth of exciting memories. The young boys and older men in the village all look up to him and with one eye remaining and several missing fingers, he is a survivor whose stories of military heroics keep his listeners spell-bound. There are lots of incredible anecdotes, many of them true, derived from adventures in the company of the previous ruler, the third Thutmose.

As a young man coming from a poor family with many children, Merimose's had been a typical path to the armed forces. He had been bored, unmarried and looking for something a little more stimulating than hoeing and harvesting. There was already plenty of help at home to tend the modest field so, to his father's relief, he joined the ranks of the army aged twenty. It would be one less mouth to feed. If he had been looking for adventure, he found more than he could possibly anticipate.

The third ruler with the name Thutmose had finally come to reign on his own upon the death of his stepmother and illegitimate 'co-regent', Hatshepsut. As was common in times of disruption or change, Egypt's subdued foreign enemies began to revolt and punitive measures were needed. Thutmose III immediately rose to the occasion and, mustering a huge army, he marched east to inform all that Egypt was still the dominant power in the region. Merimose was thrilled and got his first taste of battle, which created an insatiable desire for more. Thutmose wouldn't disappoint. During the next three decades, he organized almost a dozen and a half military campaigns.

That first journey to the east proved to be the most memorable for Merimose, who was awestruck at the size of the operation he was now a part of: the long line of soldiers bearing their weapons, the horses and chariots, and the trains of donkeys to support them all. Never having left the vicinity of Thebes during his life thus far, there was so much new and strange to see. The journey down the Nile on the troop ship heading north was fascinating: he passed temples and pyramids and realized for the first time just how big Kemet actually was. The march east, too, was full of new experiences and environments. Battle came all too soon and Merimose threw himself into it with youthful vigour and little appreciation for his own mortality. Stabbing, lopping, and clubbing ... he had savoured it all! And now he did so alongside his new comrades as it proved surprisingly easy to subdue many of the smaller towns, while others required siege tactics to wear down the enemy trapped in their own walled cities. It was a lesson in the intricacies of warfare.

On that initial expedition, it was heard that a coalition of anti-Egyptian instigators led by the rulers of Kadesh was in the region, visiting the city of Megiddo. In a surprise move, the Egyptian forces were able to come up

behind the enemy forces, causing them to discard their gear in a desperate attempt to seek safety behind the city's walls. In a rare instance of ill discipline, many of the Egyptian soldiers took advantage of the abandoned booty while many of the chiefs and soldiers of Megiddo escaped inside. (Merimose was proud that he'd resisted the temptation.) The Egyptians surrounded the city with a trench and a wall made from nearby trees to make sure that no one could escape. The enemy eventually surrendered after seven months of siege, which to a young Merimose seemed like an age – he was forced to learn his army's trademark patience and creativity. Ultimately, he discovered, this was the way to continued victories.

Success whet the appetite of both Thutmose and his forces, as those who returned home alive would be a bit wealthier as a result. Thutmose certainly would be, with a huge number of captives and booty heading west to Egypt – and so would Merimose. He and other veterans received small but very welcome land grants. Ever since the foreign rulers, the Hyksos, had been chased out of Egypt about seventy years previously, there have been military campaigns to the east, as well as south into Nubia, but there has been no one with the irrepressible energy of Thutmose III!

The humiliation of the Hyksos is not to be forgotten and it was somewhat ironic that some of the same technology that allowed them to dominate Egypt for a time was used against them by the Egyptians themselves, specifically the horse and chariot. It was a different and complicated kind of weapon, but very effective. The horses, most of which were imported from captured eastern lands, required special training as did the men who rode speedily behind them in wooden reinforced chariots. The charioteers were a special breed, and an elite complement to the infantry, and Merimose admired their skill and bravery. Two horses were required to pull the chariot holding its two occupants. One soldier was an expert archer and the other would drive the galloping steeds with reins in one hand while protecting himself and his partner with a shield in the other. At the battle of Megiddo, the Egyptians captured over 2000 horses and over 900 chariots.

The Egyptian army was highly organized with its ultimate commander being the ruler himself with one of his sons often in reality fulfilling those responsibilities. The army could be divided into northern and southern entities, each being directed by a hierarchy of officers. The actual troops were divided into a number of components including squads of 10 men, platoons of 50, companies of 500 and ultimately divisions of 5000. Of course, there would be a need for scribes for noting supplies, casualties and the accumulation of captives and booty. Additionally, a fleet of ships was available to transport men and equipment to convenient ports as needed, and also deliver the fruits of conquest back home.

Much of Merimose's training had been in hand-to-hand combat using sharp weapons. He had tried his hand at being an archer, but he just wasn't very good at it. Slashing and stabbing became his forte and in between expeditions

he would train hard both in fighting skills and maintaining a high level of physical fitness. Still, there would be the occasional injury and Merimose had seen many of his fellow soldiers die brutally. He had lost an eye to a glancing spear, and then several fingers to the blade of an incredibly sharp sword during the same battle. A fellow soldier had stepped in and finished off the enemy combatant while an angry Merimose was pulled back behind the lines to be treated by a military physician. The soldiers were fortunate to receive the care that was available; Egyptian doctors were looked up to by people of other lands.

Despite the occasional setback, Merimose had enjoyed most of it, especially when returning home from Egypt to a joyous populace who lined the river banks or streets to offer their welcome. The pageantry was magnificent with grand ships sailing the Nile, and then on land where rows of infantry marched with their sharp spears and shields made of wood or cow hides, followed by archers with their bows and quivers. There were the standards held high, identifying each fighting unit, along with charioteers and their groomed prancing and snorting horses, and the field officers dressed in their finest. There was nothing like it.

Old Merimose especially likes to relate the story of the conquest of Joppa along the coast of the Great Green (Mediterranean). The Egyptian general, Djehuty, negotiated with the chief of that city and offered two hundred baskets of food and other supplies. Little did they know that each of the baskets contained an Egyptian soldier who would emerge and open the city's gates to invasion. Being smaller than most, Merimose was chosen for this potentially deadly ruse, but it worked perfectly and the siege of Joppa was soon over.

But, feeling increasingly worn-out from years of fighting, Merimose retired from military life with mixed feelings at about age forty-five. He certainly misses the excitement of fighting in the company of his comrades with the charismatic ruler, Menkheperre Thutmose, leading the way. At the same time, he marvels at the fact that he had survived for so long, while many of the others did not. Fortunately, his extended family seemed to enjoy his company and make sure he is well cared for – and, after all, one of them would eventually inherit that land grant.

The present ruler, the second Amenhotep, is certainly developing a tough reputation, although the number of his military campaigns are thus far few compared to his father. As expected, the vile Asiatics began causing problems at the death of Thutmose so Amenhotep had needed to respond. During one successful rampage, he personally clubbed to death seven foreign chiefs whose bodies he hung upside down from the prow of his magnificent royal ship as he returned to Thebes. Six of the bodies were hung on the city's walls and the seventh rotting corpse was taken to Nubia and similarly exhibited to send a message that Egypt was both victorious and would not be threatened. The word has spread widely that the son of the third Thutmose is a force to be

reckoned with.



A NEW KINGDOM WARRIOR PHARAOH BATTLES HIS FOES

The Egyptians had several gods that were patrons of war. The chief god, Amun-Re, could be invoked in vanquishing enemies as could Montu, a god of Thebes in the form of a falcon. The goddess Sekhmet, too, took the form of a lioness who was both protective and ruthlessly violent.

Merimose crawls back on to his sleeping bench and squints shut his one functioning eye, hoping to resume his dream of wild combat in foreign lands. His ensuing nocturnal journeys don't deliver as hoped; instead, there is a flying, singing crocodile snatching a basket of fish from an angry monkey, a fight with a long-dead friend over the ownership of a missing loincloth, and twenty dancing girls standing motionless in a sandstone quarry. And all through this, Merimose would fall off his bench three more times before the sun rises in the east to announce another day.





11TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(04.00–05.00)

THE PRIEST OF AMUN-RE IS AWAKENED

*Hail to thee, Amun Re! lord of the thrones of the two lands
Thou who dwellest in the sanctuary of Karnak.
Bull of his mother, he who dwelleth in his fields,
Wide-ranging in the Land of the South.*

HYMN TO AMUN-RE

Paser is sleeping soundly when he is rudely awakened by a kick to his side. ‘Get up! Your turn is coming!’ Paser glances around the room now dimly lit by a couple of oil lamps, a room where dozens of straw-filled mattresses lie about, each covered by a bald man, stirring to reality. ‘It’s time!’ resumes the familiar voice. It is Renni, the astrologer, who always knows exactly when the sun will arise and how much time is required in advance for the men to do their most important jobs.

They are priests of Amun-Re, the mighty god of Thebes. Noted for his power and credited with much of Egypt’s success over the last several generations, he was elevated to the level of the chief among gods. He was joined with the sun and is perceived as a creator-god as well. The Karnak temple attests to it. It is already large and still growing, as are the property and wealth associated with it and the number of bureaucrats and full-time employees required to maintain it all.

The Karnak temple complex at Thebes is the largest religious structure in the world, covering over 100 hectares. Already established in the Middle Kingdom (c. 2050 to 1650 BC) the site was expanded greatly throughout the New Kingdom and continued to be enhanced thereafter over the next thousand years. Along with the great temple to Amun-Re, there were smaller temples and shrines dedicated to other gods and rulers, multiple sets of

Paser throws off his linen sheet and wraps a kilt around his waist and a shawl over his shoulders. It is time for the daily morning ritual. The god must be cleaned, clothed and fed at sunrise and there is lots of preparation to do. The group of priests gather outside of their barracks in the outer courtyard of the temple and proceed to march to the compound's sacred lake to purify themselves. Dressed similarly and bald, it is sometimes hard to tell one apart from the other in the flickering torch light other than by size and gait.

Reaching the lake, the priests leave their garments with awaiting attendants and enter the water, descending its stone steps until fully immersed. Every one of them is completely hairless, an aspect of purification that requires daily maintenance, and that is considered part of the job. Someone passes around a bowl of liquid from which all the priests sip and then spit. It is natron mixed with water. The god does not like bad breath.

As many times as he had done this, Paser has never got used to the often very cold water just after waking up. He always emerges extra-clean, he admits, and alert if not chilled. Drying themselves off, the priests are handed sparkling-clean garments and continue to prepare for the morning ritual.

Paser has been actively involved as a priest for several years. His father had been appointed by Amenhotep himself, and then Paser had inherited the honour. The priests were certainly needed. The ruler is technically the High Priest serving all of the gods, preserving their goodwill so *maat* would be maintained. But it would be physically impossible for him to be everywhere every day as needed, especially with dozens of small temples up and down the Nile and a growing number in Nubia. Apart from the chief gods of large important centres such as Thebes with its focus on Amun-Re, and Memphis with its devotion to Ptah, every district, it seems, has a special patron god.

If Amun-Re wasn't enough to keep Paser and his fellow priests occupied, the god's relatives, too, play roles in the bigger picture and demand worship. At Thebes, Amun-Re's wife, Mut, has a temple and a priesthood established for her. Their son Khonsu is also not to be neglected. It takes a great number of people and a lot of resources to support all of this. The temple of Amun-Re at Thebes owns vast tracts of land, much of it let out to tenant farmers who receive subsistence in return for their labour. Much of the rest of the grain or other produce goes to the temple granaries or storage areas where it is used to feed the thousands involved. There are huge herds of cattle as well, and a wide range of items acquired by donation, obligation or force.

The priests at the various temples in Egypt were there to serve the gods. Unlike priests or rabbis found in Western societies, they did not serve as personal counsellors to parishioners. Their job was to perform the proper rituals necessary to appease the gods in place of the ruler himself who served as the ultimate High Priest of them all, and not necessarily to facilitate the worship of average Egyptians.

To prepare the food for the gods and to maintain the priests and temple staff, there is a need for bread and beer-makers, butchers to process meat, weavers to produce fresh linen for the priests and washers to keep everything clean and pure, along with a host of other workers with other specialized tasks. Therefore, to supervise and keep track of all of these resources and temple employees, it is necessary to have a sizable bureaucracy – not surprisingly, there are numerous overseers, scribes and accountants involved.

Paser bears the title Fourth Priest of Amun-Re, which is certainly important, but not as much as that of the third, second and first. In time, perhaps he will work his way up through those other positions if they ever become available, probably when their occupant dies. It doesn't matter. Paser is doing his duty to Egypt's chief god and his title certainly impresses those outside the temple in his home town, a few days' travel up the Nile.

Like most of his fellow priests, Paser doesn't tend to Amun-Re full-time. At home, he is a professional scribe, and only serves the Theban temple three times a year, with each stint lasting a month. The system of having rotating priests diminishes the ability of the priesthood to become too powerful, and Paser thinks that makes his job much easier – it's better than being a full-time priest. He even looks forward to his duty each time, at least at first. It takes him away from his often routine job of recording tallies and he likes many of his temple colleagues, all of whom are educated, even if some of them snored in the barracks. As a literate member of the community with religious and ritual knowledge, between his months of temple service Paser often supplements his income as a scribe by providing ritual services to his neighbours, such as writing letters to someone's deceased relative whose intercession is urgently requested in some situation or other.

Now clean and awake, the priests walk through the still-dark central courtyard to one much smaller. This area is restricted to themselves or other necessary facilitators of the rituals, and as one progresses further into the compound, it becomes even more exclusive. Paser occasionally wonders how much the average Egyptian knows about what takes place in Amun-Re's temple. The temple compound itself is cordoned off from the rest of Thebes by an impressive enclosure wall, which serves as a sign to 'Keep out!'. Average individuals who have a reason to be there could come into the outer courtyard and take care of whatever business is required. One errand that brings people into the courtyard is to leave a small stela to thank the god for hearing their prayer. These small tablets generally have one or more ears represented on them. The visitors would see the many workers at their tasks, but access from thereon is usually restricted, with large pairs of broad tower-like pylons forming a gate to the sacred areas.

If they proceeded beyond, they would be dazzled by colourfully decorated columns supporting the roof. During the day light is provided by rectangular gaps in the walls near the ceiling. Along the way are walls covered with inscriptions noting the achievements of the likes of the third Thutmose and

that of the present ruler, the second Amenhotep. There are the gleaming obelisks that all can see from miles away and side-chambers containing extraordinary items of wealth. In one room is the sacred barque: a small boat with a shrine aboard for transporting the image of the god during festivals. Each area constricts in size until a final chamber is reached: this is the sanctuary where the god is to be found.



THE GOD AMUN-RE

A very faint glow in the east indicates that the morning ritual will be starting in just minutes. With the aid of the torches' flames Paser could see that the inner courts of the temple are sparkingly clean, as usual; this is the work of the *wab*-priests, the novices whose job it is to make sure that every place and thing is appropriately pure, including any item involved in the ritual. Laid on tables in front of the final chamber is an immense display of high-quality food and wine fit for a supreme god, a quantity of incense set in burners, a set of miniature clothing and jewellery, along with oil, cosmetics and pieces of fine linen.

Paser and the other priests lined up as the doors guarding the innermost sanctuary are unsealed and opened. Every phase of this activity is accompanied by the recitation of a solemn formula. Immediately the room is

fumigated with incense and a lector priest begins to recite hymns to Amun-Re with the others joining in as a chorus:

*Thy loveliness is in the southern sky,
Thy sweetness in the northern sky.
Thy beauties conquer hearts,
Thy loveliness maketh arms to droop,
Thy beautiful form maketh hands to fail;
Hearts faint at the sight of thee.*

At the very back of the small chamber is a stone shrine; it, too, has sealed doors, which the First God's-Servant of Amun-Re steps through the torchlight to open, reciting the appropriate formula. As the doors swing back, an extraordinary image of the god is revealed: a stone statue with inlaid eyes, dressed like royalty and adorned with symbolic jewellery. The statue is only about half the size of a normal adult human, but the effect it has on Paser and the assembled priests is that of utter awe and due reverence.

The priests of Egypt did not worship the physical cult statue per se. They believed that a particular god was actually present and inhabited the image and thus could be addressed and praised directly in its sacred space.

The First God's-Servant performs most of the ritual. First, he needs to completely disrobe the image in order to prepare Amun-Re for cleaning. The clothing is put aside and the statue wiped down with new and purified linen before scented oil is applied. Cosmetics are added to the face and then fresh clothes are donned. In a fixed progression, a fresh garment of white cloth is followed by one of green cloth and then one of red cloth. Finally, an assortment of jewellery is brought forth and Amun-Re is supplied with a golden necklace and a crown, and last of all a robe of fine linen is reverently placed over the other garments as Paser and the priests outside continue their ingratiating chorus:

*One and only one, maker of all that are,
From whose eyes mankind issued,
By whose mouth the gods were created,
Who makest the herbage, and makest
to live the cattle, goats, swine and sheep ...
He maketh the life of fishes in the river,
The fowl of the air,
Giving breath to that which is in the egg;
Making the offspring of the serpent to live;
Making to live therewith the flies,*

*The creeping things, and the leaping things, and the like.
Making provision for the mice in their holes ...
Hail to thee, maker of all these!
One and only one, with many arms!
At night wakeful while all sleep
Seeking good for his flock.*

The god is ready for the day, but still needs to be fed. Several trays of delectable food and jars of drink are put before Amun-Re while the chanting and singing continues. The First God's-Servant slowly backs away to leave the sanctuary, sweeping the floor to remove the footprints of any possible malign influences, then closing the doors and sealing them with a knotted cord and a ball of clay. Amun-Re has been venerated, clothed and fed, at least for the morning.

Later, there will be at least two more visits to the image for noon and evening meals, and then the god will be locked into his shrine until the next morning. The cycle will continue, day after day, throughout Paser's month of service. On occasion, there are festivals in which Amun-Re will depart his sanctuary – with assistance, of course – and actually leave the temple compound. Despite its sometime mundane nature, Paser enjoys his service in the temple most of the time and there were some benefits. For example, he eats very well. The food piled up to impress and feed the god is distributed afterwards among the appreciative priests. The divine leftovers are the best in the land; perhaps only the king eats better.

In between the rituals there is much to do including shaving, with some of the other priests razoring the bits Paser cannot reach. The temple archives are available to research whatever subject might be of interest and, much to Paser's delight, there is often a lot of camaraderie and discussion among the priests themselves. This morning, Paser proposes the question, 'Is it wrong that I feel bad when I praise Amun-Re for creating creeping things like snakes, or flies, or mice in their holes? I don't like any of those! Snakes are dangerous, flies are annoying, and at home, the mice are constantly trying to invade my granary!' Most agree with Paser's feelings and it is good to know that he isn't alone, but the chanting and singing will continue as usual; after all, these are words established eons ago and Amun-Re, mighty god of Thebes, requires them to be spoken – praise for flies, snakes and mice included.



PRIESTS CARRY A SACRED BARQUE WITH THE IMAGE OF A GOD DURING A FESTIVAL





12TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(05.00–06.00)

THE FARMER STARTS HIS DAY

As observed, these people obtain their harvests with less work than anyone else in the world, including the rest of the Egyptians; they have no need to operate ploughs or hoes, or to use any other of the usual means of cultivating their land; they merely wait for the river to on its own flood their fields; and then when the water has receded, each farmer sows his plot, employs pigs to tread in the seed, and then awaits the harvest. Pigs are also used for threshing and then the grain is stored.

HERODOTUS, *The Histories*, Book II

The sun is barely breaking on the eastern horizon when Henu wakes from his sleeping mat on the floor of his small house. Quietly shrugging off his linen sheet so as not to awake his sleeping family, he stands up, stretches and heads into the other room to prepare for work. He grabs a jug of beer from the corner and sloshes it down followed by a chunk of bread and a bite from an onion, before heading out the door. It is certainly a bit chilly but warmth will soon be on its way as Re arises in the east.

It will be another busy day, especially this time of year. After several months of flooding, the Nile has finally receded, and many of the surrounding fields are refreshed with the fertile silt deposited by the river; indeed, planting has already begun. Henu's plot of land is relatively easy to manage. It is leased from the priesthood of Amun, who expects that a certain amount of the yield – in this case, much of it – will end up in their granaries and storehouses. Still, there would be plenty to sustain his family with food for the entire year, along with a surplus to use for barter with those of other occupations.

For the most part, farming a large plot of emmer wheat and barley – the

basic ingredients for the Egyptian staples of bread and beer – is relatively easy except for the sowing and harvesting. During the annual flood stage, the fields are always underwater for a few months, but as soon as the water recedes, there are boundaries to reset and irrigation canals to be repaired. The land might need tilling, or not, and that could involve some strenuous work by hand or the assistance of a couple of borrowed cattle.

The Egyptian calendar was composed of twelve months of thirty days each. An additional five days designated as birthdays of gods were added annually in an attempt to make up for the actual solar year, which we now understand as $365\frac{1}{4}$ days, thus the ‘leap year’ in the modern calendar. Being a society with agriculture as its foundation, the Egyptian year was split into three seasons of four months: flooding, growing and harvesting. Specific dates were tied to the year of a ruler’s reign, for example Year 12, third month of harvest, day 17 during the reign of Aakheperure Amenhotep.

Today, Henu will need to break up the soil in just one small corner of his plot, which will require a lot of strength, before spreading the seed. Sure, he has a cow and a couple of goats, among a few other livestock, but the cow is being used for milk, and his goats wouldn’t take a harness. Fortunately, his neighbour and best friend Seni is a herdsman and, in exchange for a basket of vegetables, two sturdy bulls will be lent for a few hours. Seni is already up and untethering the cattle, and the two are soon off to the nearby field. With the expertise acquired from a lifetime of labour, the cows are quickly yoked side by side and rigged with rope to pull a large wooden plough that will tear up the earth.

The ancient Egyptians during the New Kingdom had no coins or other form of monetary currency and the staples of bread and beer were a regular means of payment. Barter was normal and there was a unit of exchange called a *deben* based on a uniform amount of copper, about 90 grams worth. Prices of various goods could be assessed by their relative value in comparison to this measure.

Seeing to the affected areas would likely take them the next couple of hours, and sometimes it would be strenuous work. Even with Seni willing to guide the cows around, Henu would have to exert heavy downward force on the plough to keep it effective and on course. After that, the sowing would be easy. It would be just a matter of donning a purse full of seed and scattering it by hand followed by its trampling into the soil by sheep, pigs, donkeys or cattle. And for the seeds to grow it was a case of keeping the canals clean and functional. The grain that would sprout over the next few months required little care other than the occasional weeding, if need be, or the discouraging of vermin from the land and river.

The seeming ease of waiting for the harvest has encouraged a condescending viewpoint of farmers by some of the elite, who look upon agriculture as a somewhat lackadaisical profession, but that isn’t really the

case. Many of the farmers also grow certain foods all year round, including vegetables and fruit such as onions, cucumbers, melons, lettuce and grapes. Those plots are on raised ground and have to be watered and maintained constantly. In most cases, any ploughing here is done by hand, and water has to be repeatedly physically carried and distributed using large, heavy jars.



PREPARING THE LAND FOR PLANTING

Apart from wear and tear on a farmer's body, there are other hazards that lurked in the fields including snakes and scorpions. The cobra, in particular, is greatly feared, especially when the produce of the field is lush and tall. An encounter could go wrong very quickly, and a cobra's bite was more often than not fatal. Henu's own father had succumbed to the venom a dozen years before, despite the efforts of a local physician who tried every medicament and magical spell in his repertoire to no avail. There are other dangerous snakes such as the horned viper – best not to anger – but the cobra could also spit its poison from a short distance, aiming for the eyes and often causing blindness.

Scorpions, too, could be problematic. They could be found in dozens of unexpected places, under rocks and behind home furnishings, ready and willing to swing their stinger into a hand or foot. Although causing severe pain and feverish symptoms, scorpions rarely kill grown adults, but children certainly could succumb. Snakes and scorpions both could make their way into homes, preferring to stay hidden, but willing to react at a moment's disturbance.

As a feared, dangerous creature, the cobra was a powerful symbol in ancient Egypt. It was sometimes featured on the forehead of the royal headdress and represented the intimidating and commanding authority of the ruler, and the goddess who protected and defended him, who was identified with the eye of the sun-god himself.

Unable to grow grain when the river floods every year, most farmers are not just sitting around relaxing. They could be put to work at home or helping with other professions. And there is always the possibility that they would be recruited for national projects that required the assistance, if not brute strength, of thousands of men. Henu has heard of the mammoth artificial mountains far to the north – tombs of ancient rulers – that were built in such a way. With a wife, children and some vegetables to grow, he prefers to stay at home rather than being drafted to work elsewhere.

The ancient Egyptian literary work known as the *Satire of the Trades* warns young scribes-in-training of the horrors of many ordinary jobs including the agricultural professions, and the grape-grower is specifically cited: 'The vintner bears a yoke across his shoulders, and each shoulder is burdened with age. There is a swelling on his neck and it festers. He spends the morning watering leeks and the evening nurturing coriander after spending the middle of the day in the palm grove. More than any other profession he becomes exhausted and dies.'

Harvesting certainly is no joy. The stalks of grain are cut by hand and then threshed and winnowed. A quantity of loosened grain is deposited in a simple home granary annexed to the house but the majority is given to the landowners, the priesthood of Amun in Henu's case, and they are certain to appear at some point with a scribe in tow. They would retrieve their share, and the straw from the grain stalks could be used for animal fodder or put to use by the brick-makers. Harvesting flax isn't particularly easy either. The plant requires some extensive processing before its fibres can be processed into cloth, but that's the weavers' problem.

Even when metal such as copper was available, the Egyptian farmers still often used wooden sickles fitted with serrated blades chipped from flint. This technology had been in use from the earliest days of agriculture and, although the wooden handles would rot away over time, the discovery of such imperishable stone sickle blades indicates to archaeologists that agriculture was being practised at an ancient site.

With Seni's assistance, Henu will likely have finished working on the area to be tended in another hour or so, then he'll tour the canals surrounding his property. If all is in order, he'll drop by his home for another few bites of food before loading up his donkey with a few hand tools and heading up to the vegetable garden later this morning. Henu feels he should also invite Seni round for dinner. Seni is unmarried and often sleeps near his herd in a crude hut made from branches. Henu has often invited him over, much to the disapproval of his wife, Mutemwia, who finds him dirty and boring in conversation. She says he often showed up reeking of excessive beer, and then drinks far more than his share as a guest. Maybe she has a point.

Henu knows that when he briefly returns home after checking the irrigation he will find Mutemwia already busy making bread. Soon, she will start preparing food for the main meal in the evening, which in many cases is

the highlight of Henu's day. Often it is a stew composed of vegetables from their own garden, spiced with salt and coriander, or maybe something that has been obtained by trading. Grilled fish is always a possibility. Manu the fisherman lives down the way and he almost always has something available on a good day.

Many of the elite tombs of Egypt's bureaucrats during the New Kingdom contain beautiful wall paintings depicting agricultural activities as part of a hoped-for utopian Afterlife. Interestingly, the well-heeled official/tomb-owner might even be seen ploughing a field in his best pleated linen skirt with his wife alongside, apparently to show how they facilitated a bountiful crop with ease. Scenes of offerings to the deceased would often feature tables loaded with agricultural goods and chunks of meat. In some cases, baskets of actual food items were put into the tomb for the mummy's sustenance.

On occasion, Henu would slaughter one of the sheep or pigs living in his house, especially when their numbers are increasing. The fat from the tail of a sheep is especially useful as it could be used for frying. The cow, however, is not to be touched. Its milk is put to use nearly every day. Beef is food for the wealthy and Henu and his family barely have it once a year, and then only at a special celebration such as a marriage banquet or even a funeral.

Henu pushes down hard on the plough as his friend leads the bulls. Even though he is a herder, none of the cattle supervised by Seni are his own. They, like the land Henu works, belong to the temple estate and he is paid with regular bread and beer rations. The work can be sporadically difficult, but most of it is just making sure his charges are well fed, watered and healthy. This could involve moving a dozen head from place to place, and then a lot of sitting. Seni has to be skilled, though, in a variety of tasks, including tending to minor wounds the animals might incur, breaking up altercations between annoyed beasts, and delivering and caring for newborn calves. In extreme cases, a veterinarian might be called in to deal with confounding injuries and diseases.

The Egyptians were concerned annually about the level of the Nile. If it was too high, it could cause devastation to villages. If it was too low, then the crop yield might be lessened and in a worse case, there would be famine. Devices to track water levels were constructed along the Nile, which scholars refer to as Nilometers, several of which still survive. Prayers could be used to appease the Nile god, Hapi, who was usually depicted as a fat man with green skin and plants growing out of the top of his head.

For now the ploughing goes on, Seni guiding the bulls around the field as Henu churns the earth. The sun continues to traverse the sky on a course just as inevitable as that of any farmer's day in Kemet took. For them the work never stops.

A



1ST HOUR OF THE DAY

(06.00–07.00)

THE HOUSEWIFE MAKES BREAD

A favour which the ruler gives to Osiris, the great god, that he might give offerings consisting of 1,000 loaves of bread, 1,000 jugs of beer, oxen and fowl, alabaster and clothing.

A TYPICAL OFFERING INSCRIPTION FOUND IN FUNERARY TEXTS

Mutemwia finally wakes up as sunrays enter the house. In the distance she can hear Seni the herder yelling something at a pair of bulls. ‘Must you make so much noise?’ thinks Mutemwia, distracting herself from having to get up. She has slept in but now gets up and considers her day. Milk the cow, feed the children and Henu’s widowed mother, Katabet, make bread and beer, mend and wash clothing, tend to the animals, feed the family some more ... the chores are endless.

Looking around her small three-room home, she gives little consideration to the fact that apart from births, deaths and occasional celebrations and religious festivals, one day is pretty much the same as the next most of the time. When she awoke each morning, her husband typically would be already off to work, and her children would be soundly sleeping next to her while her mother-in-law snored nearby, loudly and incessantly.

Grabbing a milk jug, Mutemwia nearly trips over a couple of geese quacking in the front room, and then squints in the bright sunlight before finding the cow tethered near the door of the house. The cow barely notices, contently chewing fodder while the vessel is filled. Mutemwia goes inside and wakes her young children, serving each a bowl of mash composed of bread soaked in the fresh milk. Katabet, too, gets up and sits with the children while Mutemwia puts on a simple kilt coming up to her waist, all that would

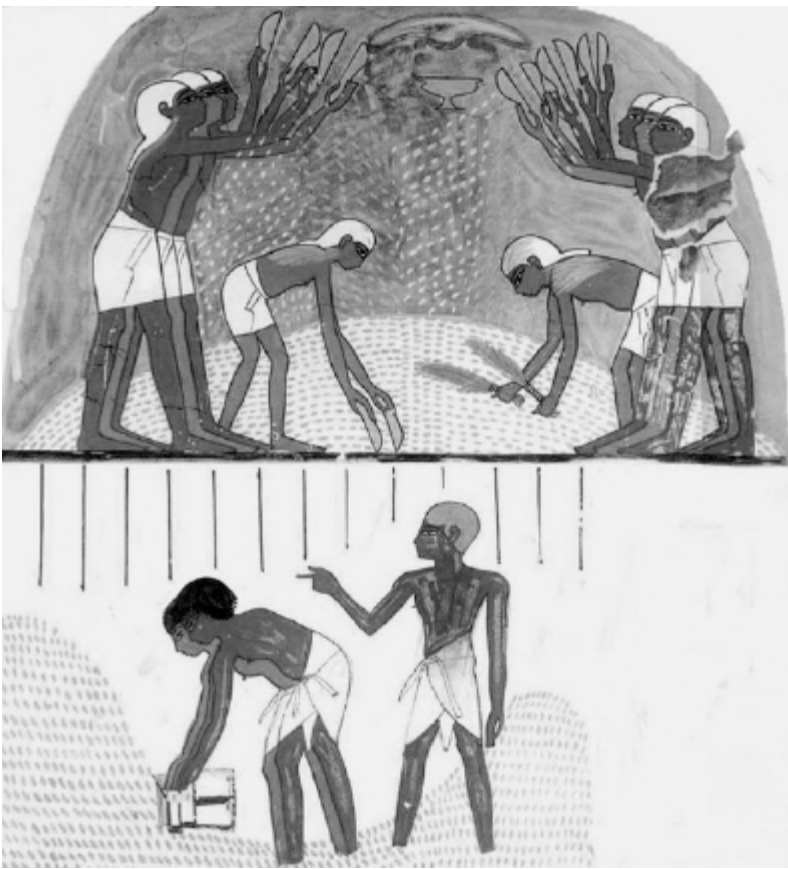
comprise her clothes for the day.

Mutemwia only has three children, two young boys under four years and a six-year-old girl, all too young to be of much help in the fields or in the house, although her daughter often follows her around and imitates her. Katabet, however, will supervise the children throughout the day so Mutemwia can go about her business. Nearly toothless and a bit feeble, Katabet's job is to keep them out of trouble and danger in the hope that they might survive childhood.

The home's supply of bread and beer is nearly exhausted and it is time to once again produce batches of these classic Egyptian staples. The agricultural blessings of the river almost guaranteed that no resident of Kemet would ever starve and, even when the Nile disappointed, granaries large and small usually hold a surplus. The fields are so productive that, on occasion, tribes from Libya or Canaan would drift into Lower Egypt to escape famine in their own lands.

The process of transforming grain from the field into flour could leave a certain amount of grit in Egyptian bread. Additional grit could be blown in by winds from the desert. It could take a certain toll on the consumer's teeth as evidenced by heavy wear found on many an excavated skull or mummy.

Mutemwia reaches into the small bricked granary built on to the side of the house and fills a basket with coarse grain, bringing it inside to where the grinding stone awaited. Taking a place on her knees, she throws handfuls of wheat on the quern. Leaning forward she pounds and rolls the grain with the round stone in an effort to pulverize it into flour. Back and forth, back and forth, emptying the flour into a shallow bowl before adding more wheat. With a sufficient quantity produced, she pours a little water into the bowl and the kneading process begins, with both hands mixing, grasping and twisting.



WINNOWING AND MEASURING WHEAT IN PREPARATION FOR BREAD-MAKING

Mutemwia has a couple of options for baking. Sometimes she fills a cone-shaped pottery mould with dough and builds a fire under or around it. Alternatively, she has a small domed kiln that can be heated up; thin patties of dough can be slapped on its wall and then peeled off when sufficiently cooked. Mutemwia chooses the former and selects several moulds to be stuffed and added to the small fire built on a growing pile of ashes. From then, it will be just a matter of not over-baking it.

Bread was a normal part of temple offerings, sometimes in huge quantities. A record of a festival celebrating the god Amun-Re and the other gods of Thebes during the time of the New Kingdom pharaoh Rameses III notes 'fine bread' in the amount of 2,844,357 loaves.

Along with the bread there was the matter of beer, which apart from fetching clean water from the river, is relatively easy to make. Mutemwia stuffs a couple of chunks of barley bread into a couple of large jugs leaning against an inside wall and adds a few dates to each from the palms in Henu's garden; occasionally she uses honey when some is available. Finally, she scratches a

mark on the jar's side to make it easily distinguishable from the water and what is left of the old beer.

Everyone drinks beer. It seems to take away some of the curious tastes found in river water and is arguably healthier. It couldn't be very strong lest it detract from one's work. Mutemwia is certainly aware of this and carefully monitors the fermentation process. When the beer is ready in a few days, it will be strained to remove the bits of slimy barley-bread residue and soggy dates. Still, if enough is consumed, it is possible to become very drunk. Seni is living proof of that.

Like beef, wine is mostly reserved for the wealthy or an occasional special celebration. Yet because Henu's garden contains a few grapes, Mutemwia has experimented a little with making some of her own. There didn't seem much to it: add the juice from squeezed grapes in a jug and wait. Her results weren't that good. It was too sweet and it made Katabet drunk and silly. Surely there is a better method. The professional vintners must certainly be experts – Mutemwia has seen plenty of ships arriving at the port of Thebes, unloading large quantities of the distinctive wine vessels, a far cry from her own efforts, judging by demand for the beverage. Many of the boats originated in Lower Egypt, she had been told, and others were imported from Canaan or other far-off foreign lands.

Bread made and beer started, there is still plenty more work to fill the day. Laundry is next. The children could tag along as long as they played a sufficient distance from the river bank. Kilts, skirts, shirts, dresses and loincloths are piled into a large basket, which Mutemwia balances on her head as she makes her way down to the Nile. Smooth stones washed to the water's edge could be used for scrubbing and pounding out the grime. Henu's clothes are often filthy from working in the fields and garden, but the children rarely dirty clothing as they are completely naked most of the time, although they have endless ways to make themselves covered with mud or dust.

The washing area is a good place for Mutemwia to hear all the local news while minding her task with the other women. There are political rumours, gossip, family updates and a lot of sharing of advice. As tedious as washing is, the social interaction with the other women of the village is the highlight of the day. The laundry will then be taken back to the house where it will be hung to dry in the sun.

When Mutemwia gets home she will instruct the children to grab tiny armloads of fodder. It will add little to the amount actually needed, but it is good training for when they become bigger and the entire task is assigned to them. Some bits of grain will be spread around for the ducks, while Mutemwia sweeps the inside floors of random residues. After the clothes have dried, several items will require mending, and Mutemwia will sit cross-legged on a mat near the door and sew the necessary repairs.

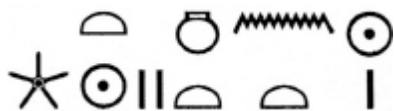
In Egyptian art, males were typically depicted with reddish skin while that of women was often yellowish in colour. The standard interpretation is that it is representative of the ancient division of labour in which men worked mostly outdoors and women mostly indoors. It is certain, though, that a lot of chores conducted by women brought them outside of the home and into the tanning rays of the sun.

There would be a light afternoon meal, which might consist of more bread, beer and some fruits and vegetables. Nice slices of melon and a raw onion could keep one satisfied until the evening repast. Tonight it would probably be a stew and grilled fish, a family favourite. Before that could happen, Mutemwia would have to walk to the river to exchange some bread for some Nile perch. Henu would be home just before dark and no doubt comment about how strenuous his day had been, mostly neglecting the fact that his wife's day allowed no free time whatsoever and most of her chores were patently unpleasant and often strenuous. But Henu does always arrive with a few sticks of wood or other burnable scraps to help keep the fire going, throwing it in a pile near the granary, so that is something, Mutemwia supposed.

Sadly, she suspects Seni will show up for dinner, probably drunk, given Henu has been working with him today, and ask immediately for some beer. He always talks incessantly on subjects of little interest, and without fail blurts out some unintentional insult against Mutemwia, Katabet or the children. And he will eat more than his fair share of food. Despite all of this, Henu seems to ignore it all. Periodically Seni will stumble out of the house to relieve himself in the street and eventually he wouldn't return. Only then can Mutemwia tidy up.

Life could sometimes be thankless, but such is the lot of a housewife in Egypt.





2ND HOUR OF THE DAY

(07.00–08.00)

THE OVERSEER VISITS THE QUARRY

She made them as her monument for her father, the god Amun, Lord of Thebes, Presider over Karnak, making for him two great obelisks of enduring granite of the South, their summits being of electrum of the best of every country, which can be seen on both sides of the river. Their rays flood the Two Lands when the sun rises between them, as he dawns in the horizon of heaven.

**INSCRIPTION ON THE BASE OF AN OBELISK COMMISSIONED BY
THE FEMALE RULER, HATSHEPSUT, AT THE TEMPLE OF KARNAK**

The walk to the quarry is hot; hot enough that even the strict overseer, Piay, is almost beginning to feel sorry for the workmen, but not quite. Even from a distance, the loud pounding of stone can be distinctly heard in various coordinated and random patterns. It is clear that several projects are in the works simultaneously. Situated outside the town of Sunu (Aswan) at Egypt's southern frontier, the quarry has been a favourite source for some of the best granite in Egypt, its highly desired reddish tinge being found long distances from the quarry in monuments all along the Nile dating back many centuries.

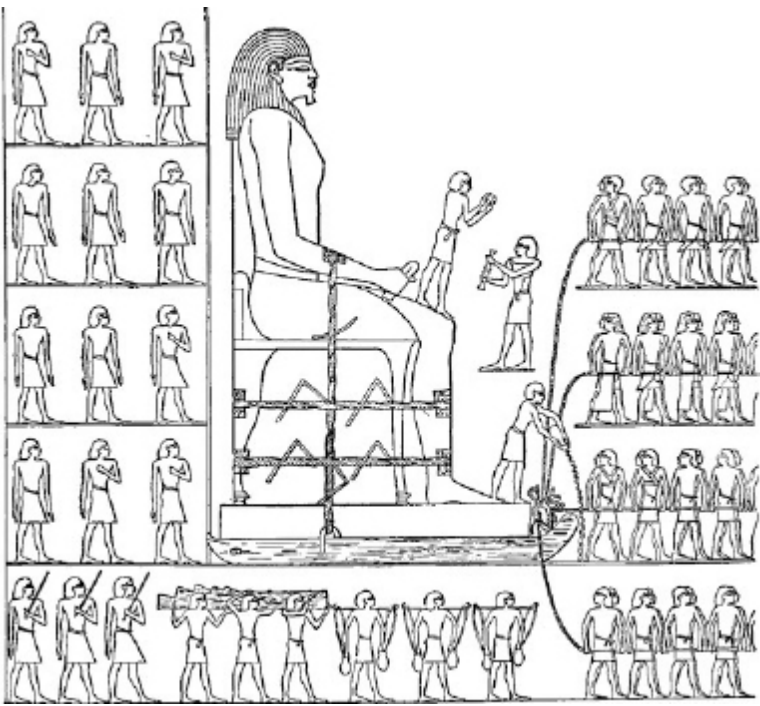
There is very little work in the quarry that isn't in some way strenuous, physically if not mentally taxing, or even occasionally frightening. Any time the moving of large stones is involved, injuries are always possible, and there have been plenty recently. A couple of men were recently killed when a large block unexpectedly cut loose, and another had a foot crushed while dragging a large stone out of the quarry aboard a sledge. And then there are the men who pass out in the heat or simply die from over-exertion. Then again, concludes Piay, most are foreign captives or Egyptian criminals. They deserve such

labour, the latter for working against *maat*, the former for not being Egyptian. Many are Nubians, Aswan being situated not far from the frontier of their land.

Reaching the quarry, Piay sees dozens of barely clad men at work on various tasks including the processing of stone blocks of the appropriate size for the creation of a royal sculpture. When ready, they would be hauled to the river on wooden sledges pulled by dozens of men bearing ropes. Reaching the bank, the blocks would be carefully slid aboard a wide barge for transport downstream to Thebes. The sculptors there would shape them into impressive works. Piay has seen a great many examples, and even though he appreciates the difficulty of releasing granite from the quarry, he is more impressed by the art of carving delicate facial features or detailed hieroglyphs in the very hard stone.

The mission today is to inspect the progress of work on two obelisks ordered by the ruler. These tapering shafts, topped by a miniature pyramid, will represent not only the rays of the sun god Re, but Re himself, as he had manifested himself at the very beginning of creation. Piay's last visit was two months previously, the quarry being one of many he is responsible for. At least this one is near the water and not far out in the desert. The quarries in the eastern desert involve a lot of overland travel, with caravans providing support to the suffering workmen. And then once the stone blocks are cut, they have to be dragged on sledges for days to reach the river and their eventual destinations.

The reddish-hued granite of the quarry is highly prized, but very difficult to work. The usual method of freeing the blocks from the walls is to pound trenches behind them by means of balls made from dolerite, a stone much harder than granite. Each strike might release a few specks of rock and, depending on the size of the block, it might take dozens of men many days of constant bashing. Once the sides have been channelled away from the mother rock, the block can be freed by chipping away at the base. It is a scary prospect but supports of stones placed beneath as the work progresses would, hopefully, keep the workmen from being crushed. Pulling with ropes or prying would finally bring the block loose.



WHETHER OBELISKS OR COLOSSAL STATUES, THE EGYPTIANS WERE MASTERS AT STONEMASONRY AND SCULPTURE

Compared to granite, which is so much more difficult to work with, sandstone and limestone are relatively easy to cut and shape. Metal saws could be used in the quarries and stone blocks could be procured in a matter of hours compared to the days often required with granite. And limestone is everywhere, although of varying quality. Many of the tombs of the elite were carved directly into the thick deposits found in the mountains of western Thebes, including the hidden cemetery of the rulers, a not so well-kept secret.

In terms of his building accomplishments, his king, Aakheperure Amenhotep, is far less ambitious than his predecessors. Amenhotep's step-grandmother, whose name is to be forgotten, was an active builder and at the Karnak temple she installed two pairs of soaring granite obelisks, the pyramidions at their apex encased in gleaming electrum. She also constructed an incredible memorial temple to herself along the cliffs of western Thebes, and although now much ignored, it proudly displays carved reliefs and descriptions of the cutting and transport of these monoliths. And Amenhotep's own father, Menkheperre Thutmose, commissioned three pairs of obelisks, standing tall and magnificent at the Theban temples to Amun.

While the works of Hatshepsut and Thutmose are numerous and obvious to all, Amenhotep seems to be concentrating on making his mark by enhancing or building more modest temples in the land, including those established in Nubia to reinforce Egypt's presence there. There are a few dramatic inscriptions on the walls of Karnak, and a few stone steles to be

found here and there, in which the king boisterously brags about his accomplishments, but so far nothing great and mighty, including the two obelisks under construction. While one of the obelisks of Thutmose reaches a height of 205 cubits, Amenhotep's new matching pair will only be about 5 cubits – utterly minuscule in comparison! And instead of their being yet another remarkable contribution to the giant Karnak temple complex, they are to be set up just across the river on an island. They would only serve to grace the temple of the locally celebrated ram-headed creator god, Khnum.

The largest complete surviving Egyptian obelisk can be found in a plaza near a basilica in Rome. Known today as the 'Lateran Obelisk', it was commissioned by the pharaoh Thutmose III and installed at the Temple of Karnak in Thebes by his grandson, Thutmose IV. It was later removed to Italy by the Romans in the fourth century AD and erected in their sports arena, the Circus Maximus. The obelisk was 32.18 metres (70 cubits) with a weight of about 455 tons. Another obelisk which perhaps might have eventually been even larger remains in its quarry in Aswan today. With its shape roughed out and nearly freed from the surrounding rock, a large crack across its body seems to have doomed this project to abandonment.

Piay, who calls Thebes his home, remembers the arrival of one of the Thutmose obelisks when he was a child. There was much fanfare as the immense spire of stone arrived on a giant barge during the flood season, the water having risen high enough to bring it closer to the Karnak temple. The impressive barge was specifically built for its intimidating task, without tipping or sinking during loading, unloading and transport. Although he wasn't able to watch the actual installation process, Piay knew it involved a large number of men, and lots and lots of rope. Through ingenuity and strength, each obelisk would be dragged to its awaiting base, and then the shaft raised from a horizontal to vertical position.

In 1818, the flamboyant Italian explorer, Giovanni Belzoni (1778–1823), was commissioned to retrieve an obelisk found on the island of Philae south of Aswan. Hoping to transport it down the Nile and eventually to Britain, it was accidentally dropped into the Nile while it was in the process of being loaded on to a boat. Skilled in engineering, Belzoni was able to retrieve the obelisk and today it stands on the grounds of the Kingston Lacy estate in England. The inscriptions on this obelisk played a role in the process of deciphering the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic script.

'Such a shame,' thinks Piay, who can only dream of being put in charge of such a project, and accordingly praised highly when successful. The magnificent obelisks of Thebes had all been derived from this very quarry. Instead, here are two puny contributions, weighing about 350 kilograms each. But of course he would never dare voice such thoughts out loud. When finished, Piay knows he will probably be able to touch their tops by standing on his toes and stretching his arm high. Nonetheless, he will do his job well,

ensuring that the commission is fulfilled, and he will report to the vizier accordingly.

On the ground before him lies one of the blocks, three of its sides already smoothed and tapered, and its tip coming to a point. Among the background noise is the preparation of its twin not far away, its surfaces being pounded to match. Ignoring such distractions, Piay begins some of the work he came to accomplish, which includes providing the text for the carver who will ultimately embellish the little monuments. Before they could do that, though, the script needs to be traced on to the obelisks to guide their work. Piay hands his assistant, an artist named Ramose, a papyrus scroll on which the carefully worded text is written. After a few minutes of study, Ramose straddles the obelisk and, with pen and ink in hand, uses a straight edge to draw faint grid lines across the stone's surface. The lines will be used to set the size and symmetry for the text to follow.

Then, starting above near the top of the shaft, Ramose first sketches a depiction of Amenhotep kneeling and presenting offerings enclosed in two small pots to the god Khnum. The hieroglyphs come next. Ramose unrolls the scroll to the proper portion and begins to transcribe the text between the lines he'd sketched. It isn't terribly complicated, with just a short inscription: 'Horus, The Mighty Bull, Great of Strength, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Aakheperure; Son of Re, Amenhotep, The Divine Ruler of Thebes. As a monument for his father, Khnum-Re, he made two obelisks for the altar of Re. May he celebrate the Gift of Life Ceremony forever.' Given the small size of the project, Ramose's work doesn't take long.

It would now be up to expert stonemasons to carefully incise the picture and words to produce a beautiful outcome, which would be done on site – after all, the obelisks were small and wouldn't be moved all that far. Piay and Ramose would be back in a few days to check on the progress and corrections would be made while they still could. When ready, the twins would bear a similar inscription and, much to Piay's dismay, the instructions requested that only one side on each be inscribed. 'Such a disappointment,' Piay mutters quietly so that no one else could hear. No towering monument, no giant barge, no dramatic installation in a sprawling temple. And probably no electrum embellishments; at such a small size, the precious metal would probably require protection from theft. Perhaps, he imagines and hopes, this is mere practice for a bigger project ahead, but given Amenhotep's record so far, he isn't counting on it.

Only eight royal obelisks remain in modern Egypt. Twenty-two are in other countries including France, Turkey and the United Kingdom. There are eight in Rome alone. Two that were commissioned by Thutmose III were nicknamed 'Cleopatra's Needles' in the nineteenth century and can be found in New York City's Central Park and on the banks of the Thames in London. Cleopatra lived over 1000 years after the obelisks were constructed but apparently the exotic reputation of Egypt and the ancient Greek queen of that land

served to romanticize such impressive objects.





3RD HOUR OF THE DAY

(08.00–09.00)

THE FISHERMAN BUILDS A SKIFF

... the Nile contains every variety of fish and in numbers beyond belief; for it supplies the natives not only with abundant subsistence, from the fish freshly caught, but it also yields an unfailing multitude for salting.

DIODORUS SICULUS, *The Library of History* I:36

Manu makes his way slowly towards the river, his eyes blurry from a night during which his sleep was constantly interrupted by the sounds of a baby coming into the world. Although cause for celebration, plenty of work still awaits those whose job it is to provide fish for the populace. Fortunately, the Nile rarely disappoints, and catfish, perch, tilapia and other popular edibles are typically abundant. Although one could throw a line and hook out from shore, the most effective techniques involves getting out into the water and the marshes along the river's banks, and that requires some sort of watercraft. The favourite of most is a simple skiff made from the stalks of papyrus plants. Manu's skiff is in sad shape. The day before, a couple of its chafed ropes had broken and a sizable chunk of the vessel had floated off downstream. It would have to be replaced and fortunately there is an endless supply of construction materials growing along the Nile.

Waiting near the water was Manu's friend, Ipuki, and his young son, Huy. The three often work together, spreading nets between their modest vessels and sharing the bounty. Today, they would be building a new skiff. The first step is to wade into the water and cut some fresh papyrus stalks to be deposited on the sandy bank. Ipuki volunteers to do the cutting, and Manu begins to grab armfuls and carry them to shore.

The ancient Egyptians did not refer to their river as the 'Nile', a word derived from the Greek *neilos*, meaning 'river valley'. They called it *itroo*, which simply means, 'the river', or *itroo-aa*, 'the great river'. The Egyptians believed it had its origins in waters running below a flat earth. Modern geographers explain that the river has two sources: one derived from melting snows in the highlands of Ethiopia, the so-called 'Blue Nile', and the other from lakes in Central Africa, the 'White Nile'. The two converge around Khartoum in modern-day Sudan. The natural cycle of the Nile in Egypt that once sustained the ancient civilization has now been radically disrupted with the building of an immense dam in the south. Today's Egyptians benefit from electricity, flood control and multiple growing seasons but they also require artificial fertilizers. And many archaeological sites threatened by the lake created by the dam required complete ancient temples to be rescued by moving them to higher ground.

Meanwhile, Huy is keeping dry on the bank, and Manu is glad to see that the boy is doing his job, scanning the surroundings. Although seemingly idyllic compared to some other professions, fishing has hazards worthy of respect. One could die any number of horrible deaths in the waters and marshlands of the Nile. Falling into the water and being swept away in a swift current is a constant fear, as is falling in and becoming tangled in a mesh of water plants. Of greatest concern, though, are two of the most terrifying animals in the land of Egypt: hippos and crocodiles.

Hippos are notoriously surly and their great size and large tusks can cause considerable damage to life and property. Every fisherman has his own story of close calls with the giant aquatic pig-like creatures who could bite through a skiff, and through those aboard as well. Over the years, several of Manu's friends have been killed directly or indirectly by hippos, which can stay submerged underwater for minutes only to ascend violently directly under their craft in what seemed to be intentionally malicious acts. With flailing bodies in the water, the hippo could have his way. Being plant-eaters, they have no particular interest in eating men, but will nonetheless cause havoc and traumatic injuries seemingly out of sheer meanness.

The hippos are a nuisance on land, too, Manu acknowledged. At night they emerge from the waters to continue feeding, and even with their short stubby legs, they can run fast and trample or bite anyone in their way. And they are a special nuisance to farmers, who sometimes find their crops violated by the hungry beasts. Occasionally a hunt is organized to rid an area of particularly annoying hippos but it is a very dangerous operation. True to form, the ruler, Amenhotep, has a public reputation for extraordinary and successful hunting, and is said to occasionally go out to the water to successfully subdue hippos with a harpoon. Manu isn't sure whether to believe the proclamations of the king's exploits. Is there anything sporty and dangerous that Amenhotep can't do better and bigger than anyone else? Anyway, keeping a look-out for large heads with twitching ears and big nostrils is essential.

The other menaces to be feared, crocodiles, are likewise of constant

concern. They, too, have killed many, and are deadly, carnivorous, opportunistic feeders. Anything that comes into their path might be fair game including fish, birds and any inattentive land creature who might wander into the water or too close to shore. Crocodiles make little noise as they approached their prey and are known to have snatched small children playing near the river. Grasping their prey between their strong jaws, the crocs typically submerge their meals under the water and hold their quarry tight until they drown. Manu hopes that, as well as hippos, Huy is on the look-out for the tell-tale eyes gliding silently in their direction. Interestingly, both hippos and crocodiles would occasionally get into fights. With powerful jaws and natural weapons in their mouths, the battle is decided by size, speed and ferocity.

In an old Egyptian tale recorded on a surviving papyrus document, a priest who suspects his wife of cheating with a young man creates a magic crocodile out of wax. The croc turns to life and captures the suitor, holding him underwater for seven days, after which he was brought forth as evidence of the tryst. The wife and boyfriend were put to death and the crocodile reverted to its waxy self.

It isn't all frightening, though. The riverbanks and marshes are also home to a teeming variety of birds, which also could provide both food and sport. Hunting birds is a popular pastime of the elite, who would sometimes come out on fancy wooden skiffs, standing up, throwing stick or spear in hand, ready to knock out a few. It is a recreation for calm weather, with the deluxe skiff punted through the reeds and rushes while a seated servant or family member grasps the hunter's leg to steady him and hopefully prevent a most undesirable spill into the river.

Hippos are extinct in modern Egypt and crocodiles are found only in the far south in the lake formed by construction of the giant dam at Aswan. Still, they maintain their reputation as dangerous menaces today with hippos killing more people in Africa each year than any other animal, and crocodiles killing hundreds.

By now, Manu has laid a dozen armloads or so of papyrus stalks on the shore. The first step is to make rope. Taking several long stalks, the two fishermen lay them out and proceed to beat the papyrus flat with a mallet, the same one they use to beat unruly flopping fish taken aboard their vessel. Ipuki is an expert, and can produce strong cords in a process honed by years of experience. Huy feeds him fibres rendered from the crushed plants, which are then twisted between his father's palms. There are other plants in Egypt from which ropes could be made, but the papyrus stalks are best for the little skiffs. Such rope is easy to make, and being produced from a water-plant, it seems most suitable for surviving in an aquatic environment.



FISHERMEN MANUFACTURING SKIFFS FROM STALKS OF PAPYRUS

With sufficient coils of rope produced, the work has begun in earnest, but it will take at least the rest of the morning to complete. First, two fat bundles of the stalks will be laid out, with each end arranged to taper to a point. Winding the newly produced rope, each bundle will be tightly constricted and then secured with knots before they are compressed together to form a naturally buoyant sturdy platform with enough room for a couple of fishermen and their tools, along with baskets to hold their catch. The last step will be to pull up the ends and hold them in place with lines attached to the deck. The turned-up bow and stern will allow the skiff to ply the waters smoothly by pole or paddle.

In 1969, the Norwegian archaeologist and explorer, Thor Heyerdahl, built a large ship made of bundles of papyrus with an upturned bow and stern. With an international crew of seven, the boat was launched into the Atlantic Ocean to test the seaworthiness of such reed vessels which many ancient people seemed to have used. The boat, named *Ra*, rode the currents for weeks but disintegrated short of the Americas due to design flaws. The following year, a reconfigured *Ra II* was successful and another later experiment, an even larger vessel, was kept afloat for five months, thus demonstrating the possibility that such craft could have been effectively used for contact and trade in millennia past.

Manu has seen larger versions of his skiff now and again, almost all used for fishing, and the Nile hosts regular traffic of wooden boats of all sizes, especially at the port of Thebes. The diversity of cargo is impressive, from boats full of goods, both local and foreign, to huge chunks of stone quarried from far away. With their sails aloft they arrived upstream with the winds blowing from the north, sometimes with dozens of men rowing their oars, or travelling more easily with the current from the south. Curiously, many of the wooden boats have upturned prows and sterns that very much resemble papyrus vessels, perhaps a style touching back to the distant past, Manu speculates.

While working on the skiff, the three notice several huge and impressive ships arriving on the east bank with great fanfare, shouting and noise. They are military vessels supporting what are likely to be some sort of expedition heading south, probably to Nubia. And then there is the occasional spectacle of the ruler's own magnificent ship with its falcon-headed prow and colourful streamers flying from its mast. Named *Aakheperure is the Establisher of the Two Lands*, it resembles a floating palace with the deck featuring a deluxe

wooden cabin and all the luxuries one could imagine. The synchronized oars contribute to the majestic spectacle worthy of the Lord of the Two Lands as ordinary Egyptians line the river's banks in awe.

The skiff will be finished in a few more hours, a sturdy and effective vessel. The last bit of work will be to construct a couple of life-saving loops also made from papyrus. Laying out a narrow bundle of stalks, they will be tightly bound and their two ends tied together to form an oblong loop that could fit over one's arm and shoulder in the event of an unintentional plunge. Kept on the small deck, the device has saved many a life over the years. There was a close call a few months previously when a hippo rose up near Ipuki's skiff, causing a wave that knocked him into the water. He had been concentrating on tying some knots and never saw the beast coming. Young Huy grabbed for the life ring and in his panic, threw it in defence at the hippo rather than to his father. Ipuki quickly scrambled aboard with the message, 'Please don't tell your mother!'

After the skiff is finished, there will still be much to do – there are still fish to be caught. There is always the relatively lazy option of shore-fishing – throwing a line with a copper hook from the river bank – but the skiff is nearly always more effective and productive. Multiple hooks could be dropped off the little vessel and, with a little punting about, something would almost always turn up. Fish are abundant and desired, and a commodity easily traded in the village for life's other necessities. Taken ashore, they could be grilled or split open for drying on racks. And unlike beef, fish is cheap and available to almost anyone.

Manu often carries a spear with him for the occasional opportunity to skewer a large fish in shallower water. He could drag it behind his skiff to shore while hoping that a croc wouldn't take a chunk out of it. Net fishing, though, is always the most productive. Nets thrown skilfully into the water and retrieved in short order usually turn up something, but some of the biggest yields he has ever gathered were a result of working in cooperation with Ipuki. With identical skiffs, the two would spread a broad net between the two vessels and anything and everything drifting by would get caught – mostly fish. The nets require constant inspection and repair but the effort is definitely worthwhile. They both take great delight in coming ashore with baskets loaded with fish from which they would select the best for their families before trading away the rest with others.



DELIVERING SOME DELICIOUS NILE FISH

‘Ready to get out the nets?’ Manu jokes to his friend – there is a long way to go before the boat is river-worthy.





4TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(09.00–10.00)

THE POTTER SHAPES SOME CLAY

The potter is covered with dirt while still living. He rummages in the ground more than a pig to bake his pots. His clothes are stiff with mud, his head-cloth is made of rags, and he inhales the scorching air from his blazing furnace.

Satire of the Trades

Itu, with his wife Nani, lives in a small dilapidated two-room mud-brick home with a hanging sheet of linen serving as a front door. Childless, Itu is sure they seem dedicated to each other, but less so to their work. Both hate their occupations, but such is life. Itu spends the day in a pottery workshop being splattered with mud and breathing hot, acrid fumes while Nani makes a living manufacturing linen loincloths. Every so often the two argue over whose lot is the worst. Sadly for Itu, potters are considered very low down on the social scale, somewhere akin to, but maybe slightly higher than, brick-makers. It is the muck and filth of the job that has given it such a bad reputation. ‘But I make underwear for a living,’ Nani would counter. ‘All day long nearly every day.’ And they both agree that they are vastly underpaid given their efforts and the importance of their output.

Itu’s father had been a potter and so had most of the male members of his family going back as far as anyone could remember. A city the size of Thebes with its numerous workers, temples and tombs perpetually requires pots for dozens of different uses. The average Egyptian needs vessels for storing food and water, cups for drinking, and plates for serving meals. The elite need their wine jars, and the temples need their storage and ritual vessels. The dead, too, require ceramic items to accompany them in the Afterlife or for offerings left

at their tombs. And there is the constant need for beer jugs used in payment for working. There is, too, the fact that no matter how well made, pots could and would eventually break. As a result, there are a large number of pottery workshops in the region.

It all starts with the retrieval and treatment of the clay from the river banks. Intrusive material such as small rocks and other bits of unwanted debris could be sorted but other materials such as sand or chaff might be added to the mix to temper the clay for shaping. Shaping is usually done on a wheel that could be turned by hand to produce uniformity. After the newly created and wet pot is finished, it is set out to dry and when its surface is still malleable, it could be burnished smooth or otherwise polished and additional features could be added such as decorative motifs or colour.

Complete and fragmentary pots are a major source of archaeological information. Like automobiles and clothing trends, the styles of pots changed through time and an expert in ceramics can tell, sometimes quite precisely, when a pot was made. Pot shards tend to survive well through time because pots are ubiquitous as they are readily broken and then replaced. The study of pottery is especially useful in areas where there is a lack of suitable inscriptions for dating a site. In Egypt, for example, it assists greatly in determining the age of domestic sites, or burials without decoration. Egyptian pots found in other lands can provide clues to possible trade or other interactions, as can imported pottery found in Egypt, sometimes as containers for costly products from abroad.

When completely dry, it is time to bake the pots hard. The workshop where Itu is employed has a large kiln made from bricks that allow dozens of vessels to be fired at the same time. Each is set into the kiln and placed or stacked on a platform designed to hold the items. With everything ready, a fire is lit from a small chamber below, fuelled by straw, dried animal dung or other flammable materials.

There is a good reason that the pottery workshops and kilns are located a distance away from the village. The kilns can produce irritating smoke and a bad smell that few appreciate. Having spent most of his life in such an environment, Itu barely notices it. It can be dangerous at times, too, with serious burns ever possible when working around an oven heated to high temperatures. Even so, he is rarely involved in the firing itself or the collection of fuel. Having started out as a lad fetching clay or kneading it with water with his feet in a vat, he could now usually be found on the turning wheel as his abilities are regarded as competent, if not acknowledged. Still, like his fellow potters, his pay was paltry, unlike the owner of the workshop who was clearly wealthy, appearing at times from a distance in his immaculate clothing.

Now, during the fourth hour of the day, Itu has already been at work for a couple of hours, and has produced dozens of shallow plates. As usual, the

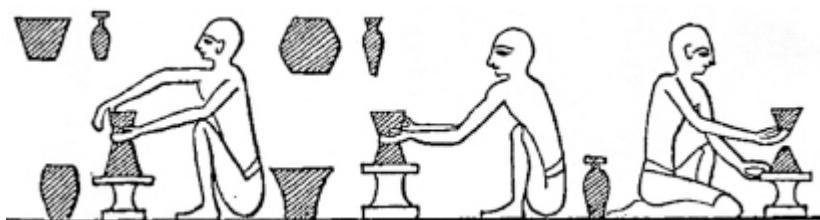
supervisor arrived demanding Itu create hundreds of large storage jars, a task that will take him and his fellow potters a good many days. Unlike simple plates, cups and small containers that could be produced in a matter of minutes, the big vessels require much more time to build and shape the wet clay to produce the desired outcome.

Some ancient water jars were made to be semi-porous. The evaporation of moisture on the outside of the pots would keep the liquid inside cool. Such vessels, often known as *zirs*, are still used in the Middle East today.

After years of repetition, making clay items is almost automatic, and often Itu will drift off into daydreams and then awaken to find a finished pot between his muddy hands. The themes of his reveries are often the same: fantasies about having some other profession. Even fishing looks more interesting, with each day having a degree of unpredictability. Occasionally, though, he thinks about his general lot in life and as he started one of the new pots, he considers the plight of his wife.

Nani had had a better life at one time, living at home with her doting parents, but it soon came to an end when she fell in love with Itu. Her parents were appalled and when she moved in with him, thus creating a marriage and a household, they essentially disowned her. Itu's parents, though, utterly approved as in their eyes, their son was improving his station in life, but such was not to be the case.

Nani's profession was equally repetitive. Making loincloths was pretty much the same day after day. At that very moment, Itu knew she would be cutting linen of various qualities into triangular shapes and then hemming their edges with thread and needle. With their three corners tied together, the garment is the simplest ever and is worn by many workers as their primary outfit.



POTTERS AT WORK

He knows Nani, too, often looks with envy at the work of others, even in her own workshop. Those working the looms seem to her far more engaged if not slightly happier and she said it reminds her of her own mother, who had had a small loom in their family home. Unlike the large vertical apparatus in the workshop, the home loom was horizontal and set up on the floor. She told how her mother would spin the flax fibres into thread, which was then

arranged in the loom to be woven over and under repeatedly to produce suitable sheets. Her father, who was a supervisor of tomb construction, usually wore a kilt every day, which was merely a length of the homemade fabric wrapped around his waist a few times and then tucked or tied, with or without a loincloth beneath. Sometimes he would wear a long tunic, essentially a loose dress coming down to below his knees and with sleeves and a hemmed hole for his head and neck. It was simple but looked far more sophisticated than anything worn by the average worker – certainly Itu has nothing of the like.

Yes, he knows that in some ways Nani's life had once been far better before she fell for his charms, and the lovely dresses she once wore at her parent's home are no more. There are, though, occasional perks to her job. While cutting and hemming underwear all day is rewarded with a few jugs of beer and some bread, she is allowed, from time to time, to take away a few bits of coarser cloth that have developed holes, and thus can sew some clothing at home, or hang a sheet as a door.

Linen was derived from the flax plant, which was grown in vast fields all over Egypt. The cloth produced from it could vary in quality depending on when the flax was harvested. The green plants produced fine, softer threads while that from the more yellow and mature stalks were tougher and thicker. Pulling up the flax was followed by a tedious process of combing and soaking the stems to release and soften the fibres, and ultimately spinning would produce thread that could be used in manufacturing several qualities of linen. The finest, softest and most expensive was gauze-like and suitable for the elite, while the others varied from softer to coarser, the latter being the most affordable.

Itu snaps out of his daydreams when a thick splash of mud from the spinning wheel slaps him across the face. The process of working with wet hands and clay always makes a mess. It is impossible not to be coated with muck from head to toe, at least on one's front. As it quickly dries on both skin and clothes under the hot Egyptian sun, it could develop a kind of crust that would require more than a little effort to scrub out. There are times when Itu arrives home looking like a kind of brown ceramic figure, sometimes naked, but too tired or too lazy to scrub himself off in the river. Feeling lethargic so early in the day increases the chance that such a scenario will likely be the case once again tonight and, as usual, he will vow to clean up on the following day. Hopefully Nani will have some food ready for him so he can exhaustedly drift off, no doubt haunted by unrealistic dreams of another profession – even making loincloths might be preferable.





5TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(10.00–11.00)

THE SCRIBAL STUDENT ANTICIPATES HIS BEATING

I will make you love books more than your own mother ... The scribal profession is greater than any other. There is nothing like it on earth.

Satire of the Trades

Nakht winces. He can't remember one of the signs needed to write a particular word. It is one of three choices, all birds, and each representing radically different sounds in the language. It would be just a matter of time before a mistake would be detected and he would feel the harsh crack of a switch across his back. Sitting on the floor of the open-roofed walled enclosure, 'the House of Instruction', he wracks his mind, hoping to remember what he was expected to know by now. Scribal school certainly isn't easy, with hundreds of signs to be precisely drawn with no mistakes tolerated. Being a scribe is quite a responsibility. With few in Egypt able to read or write, it is also a powerful profession involving a lot of trust; those who are illiterate are utterly dependent upon the scribes to write or read documents in an accurate and truthful matter.

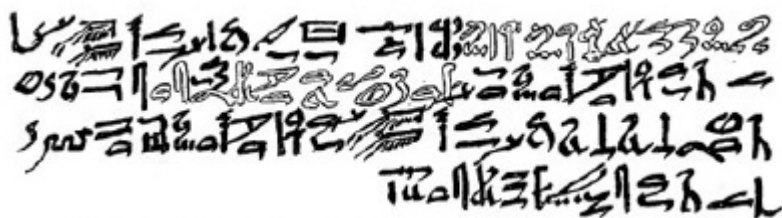
It's difficult to estimate the rate of literacy in ancient Egypt. Some estimates suggest it was as low as 3 per cent. While the average Egyptian could get through life quite well without knowing how to read or write, it was an essential skill for the masses of bureaucrats and many priests who served the complex civil and religious administration during the New Kingdom. While the scribal schools were filled with boys, there is evidence that some women were literate, most probably those from elite families.

Nakht looks around the room at his fellow students. Most of them, all boys,

are the sons of prominent members of society, many of whom are overseers or accountants, and all are expected to follow in their fathers' bureaucratic footsteps. Nakht's father is a prominent physician, and the ability to consult medical texts mandates that reading, at least, is essential. Others anticipate a career as tomb artists or supervisors of the sculptors who would carve bold hieroglyphs into large, permanent monuments of stone.

The plethora of hieroglyphs is intimidating. The script being learned could be written from left to right, right to left or even top to bottom, and it is a less formal, somewhat abbreviated type of writing than the often detailed hieroglyphs found inscribed on royal or religious monuments and objects.

'Why so many signs to tell apart?' Nakht foolishly asks his instructor, Nebamun. 'It works, doesn't it?' comes the stern reply. 'You can read it, can you not? Don't you enjoy learning? Maybe you should catch fish or make bricks!' Nakht instantly feels the sting of Nebamun's switch and yet again makes a mental note to ask questions of content rather than curiosity. And, as a kind of pedagogical punishment, Nebamun announces to all that because of the impertinent question, there is yet again a need to reinforce the notion of how privileged they are to receive a scribe's education. Once again, the students are to take dictation on the subject of the virtues of being a scribe. Nebamun will recite and the students are expected to perfectly transcribe what they hear, while repeating it in unison in a rhythmical, singsong chant.



THE CURSIVE EGYPTIAN SCRIPT

'You will write the following,' commands Nebamun. 'I have seen a coppersmith at work at the mouth of a furnace. His fingers were like the claws of a crocodile and he stank more than fish eggs. Write it and repeat it now!'

Nakht picks up a large broken shard of a pot, and wets the end of his pen in a small jug of water before dipping it into the ink on his palette. The palette, a narrow block of wood with a couple of depressions on its surface, was a gift from his father, and allows him to write in either black or red. Nebamun would rarely allow the newer students to use paper. It is far costlier than pieces of shattered jars, which can be found in great quantities in any village, or random flakes of limestone with their white surfaces. Piles of both lie in a heap in the corner of the compound. Occasionally, the students are allowed to use wooden writing boards, which would be of use when they

eventually join the ranks of the professionals. The boards are covered with a surface of washed plaster allowing for writing to be erased with water, or plastered over with another coat.

The Egyptian god of writing, wisdom and knowledge was Thoth, who could be depicted as a baboon and, more commonly, as an ibis-headed man. He is often seen holding a scribe's palette and pen, or taking notes in scenes in the Book of the Dead during which the deceased is experiencing judgement. A goddess, Seshat, also represented writing, along with accounting and mathematics.

The dull pen tip has left an ugly blotch on the ceramic surface and Nakht quickly grabs another less blunt pen tucked behind his ear. Essentially a stick made from a thin slice of reed, such pens are simple, but they certainly require skill in their use. With his eyes turned down in concentration, he begins to write the flowing characters. The words are mostly familiar; he has taken this particular condescending dictation several times and is more or less comfortable with the spellings.

‘Carpenters work harder than most. The barber shaves until late in the day. Wandering down street after street, he seeks more customers. He wears out his arms to fill his belly.’

The students write as elegantly and quickly as they are able, and try to recite clearly in unison, with no one lagging behind nor copying his neighbour – at least obviously. Nakht knows what is coming next: a nasty and snobbish assessment of arrow makers, potters and bricklayers.

‘The arrowmaker travels north to the Delta and works hard. When gnats sting him and the sand fleas bite him, he’ll hate his life. The potter is covered with earth and looks like a dead man. He roots in the earth more than a pig. His clothes are stiff with mud, and his nose is burned by the searing heat of the furnace. Bricklayers ... their kidneys hurt. Even when it’s cold and windy, they work outside mostly naked. His strength has disappeared due to fatigue and stiffness. He eats bread with his fingers, although he only washes once a day.’

The list continues, with several necessary professions including weavers, farmers and fishermen, all of whom, according to Nebamun, live utterly miserable existences. ‘Now repeat after me and then write it down: If you understand writing, then it will be better for you than all other professions. A day at school is worthwhile.’

Nakht flips over the pot shard and continues the exercise by writing on the back as Nebamun wanders about the enclosure, looking over the shoulders of his nervous but earnest students. The occasional snap of the switch indicates that mistakes are being made. Nakht averages about three strikes a week. The switch certainly hurts and is a genuine incentive to pay attention, concentrate and be serious. Occasionally the students would debate among themselves as to which hurt more: the slender switch made from a date palm branch or

Nebamun's wooden staff. Breaking into tears would result in an additional swat, and although one's mother might offer some sympathy, most fathers do not: they experienced the same themselves. Nakht's father, Neferhotep, had even been taught by Nebamun himself over thirty years previously.

Although a harsh master, Nebamun is very well respected in Thebes. When not teaching, he could often be seen seated in a shady place, busy at work. His crossed legs pulled his linen skirt taut, providing him with a flat, sturdy writing surface. He had held a variety of trusted positions over the years, and even taught writing to the young Amenemopet, now the vizier of the ruler. His expertise is widely sought, and apart from teaching writing, he is often commissioned to write copies of the Book of the Dead, a papyrus scroll bearing instructions for the deceased on how to endure the journey into the Netherworld and successfully survive judgment before the gods. Such a scroll is expensive but highly desired by those of the elite who could afford such insurance. And Nebamun is trusted for his integrity. While other scribes are known to sloppily compose funerary texts, knowing full well that their creation would be rolled up, placed in a jar and sealed in a tomb, never to be seen, Nebamun takes great care.

Nebamun uses only the best materials for this work, including high-quality paper manufactured from the papyrus plant. Those gathering the plant cut stalks near their base before removing their tops, binding them together to be carried in bundles on their back. At the workshop, the green outer skin of the plant is removed, and the fibrous inner pith cut into thin strips. The strips are laid out on a flat surface with their edges overlapping and a second set of strips, likewise with overlapping edges, is placed atop and parallel to the first. The strips could be pressed between planks with heavy rocks or bricks, and the natural adhesives in the plant material would bind the fibres into a strong paper. A single sheet could be glued to the edges of others to make a scroll as long as necessary.

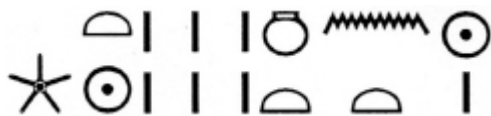
The Roman naturalist, Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), wrote the following in his description of Egypt: 'We must make some mention of the nature of the papyrus, seeing that all the usages of civilized life depend in such a remarkable degree upon the employment of paper – at all events, the remembrance of past events' (*Natural History*, Vol. 3, Chapter 21). In fact, during the period when Egypt was subjugated by the Greek and Roman empires, it became a major exporter of paper to the civilized ancient world. As climate changed over the many centuries since, the papyrus plant became essentially extinct in Egypt, the land which made it famous, and was only brought back in modern times with the establishment of a few commercial plantations for the purpose of providing novelty paper as tourist souvenirs.

Nakht began school at age eight and now, at ten years old, feels he is becoming rather good. In two more years, he will be finished with the basic course. Several days ago, he learned to write a variety of words by categories: places, people, plants, etc., after which the students had learned some

arithmetic. The latter is his least favourite subject but many scribes are expected to record things such as war booty, temple property, donations and crop yields, and even to master the computations needed for engineering operations such as the transport of stone and building of monuments. It is a very useful skill for maintaining an empire.

Still looking intently down, Nakht can hear the footsteps of his teacher moving behind a line of seated boys, looking over their shoulders for any mistake. The shuffling feet stop behind him. ‘Wrong bird!’ shouts Nebamun. Nakht knows what is coming next. Whack! The word would never be forgotten again.





6TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(11.00–12.00)

THE PRIESTESS OF HATHOR GETS DRUNK

[The pharaoh] comes to dance and he comes to sing ... his sistrum is made of gold and his necklace is made of malachite. His feet dance for the Mistress of Music. He dances for her and she loves it!

‘Hymn to Hathor’, **TEMPLE OF DENDERAH**

Hathor is a complicated goddess and everyone knows it. Often depicted as a cow, or as a woman with a sun disc between horns, or a woman with cow ears, she appears in many forms and goes by many names. At times, she is a loving nurturer and a mother-figure to the ruler, yet she has a very violent streak as well. Sometimes Hathor is called the ‘Golden One’, or she could be associated with fertility, or with trees and marshes, or with places such as the turquoise mines of the Sinai or even the land of the dead in the west where the sun sets. And she could be variously described as the wife, mother or even daughter of the sun god Re, and was thus associated with many events celebrating him. She is the goddess of music and she loves to get drunk. Yes, Hathor has many roles in many places.

On the sixth hour of this particular day, Ty is already drunk at home, much to the distress of her husband. ‘Why do you do this?’ she is asked, for what feels to her like the hundredth time.

‘I’m a priestess of Hathor, silly man. I’m doing my duty. I’m practising!’ And that is the only explanation she is going to give.

Indeed, as a priestess of Hathor, based in Thebes, Ty keeps busy participating in many of the festivals with which the goddess is associated, and those in which she is directly honoured. There are many dramatic and often joyous festivals held in Egypt each year, to which everyone could look

forward. Each temple in the land has its own celebrations in honour of its gods, but Thebes, home to the dominant deity, Amun-Re, holds the largest and most elaborate. For example, there is the famous annual Opet (or ‘Secret Chamber’) Festival, during which the god Amun-Re actually leaves the confines of his secluded, secretive chamber at the rear of the Karnak temple. His image is placed in a shrine affixed to a small wooden ship, which is carried on poles by a sturdy group of priests. Making its way through the various parts of the temple and into the sunlight, the ‘sacred barque’ eventually makes its way out of the temple compound where it is greeted by enthusiastic crowds of people lining the streets keen to have a look. It’s the closest thing an average Egyptian will have to actually experiencing the gods, given that their inhabited images are kept secure in their temples most of the time.

The ship is preceded and followed by lively groups of musicians and dancers who all but guarantee a festive occasion. Drums are pounded along with tambourines and the sounds of flutes and even harps can be heard in the mix. Acrobats do turns in the street while a dozen priestesses sing and clap. Ty is one of those priestesses and she loves every minute of these processions. With a sistrum, a symbol of Hathor, shaking in her hand, she represents the goddess with music and dance.

The sistrum is a type of rattle typically featuring a handle holding a lyre-like structure bearing metal discs that would clack together. The handles could feature the bovine face of Hathor, thus emphasizing her association with music. Rattling could also be produced by shaking marsh plants. Ivory clappers, often in the shape of arms with hands, were also popular and could make quite a racket when slapped together.

Each year, the Opet Festival procession stops here and there along its route, sometimes visiting other temples, or just pausing. It gives a great opportunity for additional adoration and ecstatic appreciation, and it also gives the carrying crew a rest before moving on. At the end of his journey, Amun-Re would be placed back into his shrine in the temple to receive the daily attentions of his assigned priests, and the public would have special memories to share while eagerly awaiting the next festival.

Another huge temple (‘Luxor Temple’) would be built in Thebes a few kilometres away from Karnak. Much of it was built by the pharaoh Amenhotep III, a grandson of Amenhotep II. During his long reign, Egypt’s vast wealth would be ostentatiously displayed with impressive construction projects throughout the land. With the new temple established, a causeway lined with stone sphinxes would connect the temples and thereafter, the Barque of Amun would travel between the two during the Opet Festival.

Living in Thebes, Ty is married to a royal steward who works for the palace. His influence helped her to be selected as a priestess, an office she serves as needed, and one she rather enjoys, especially because she, like Hathor, loves

to be drunk. There are certain festivals during which becoming inebriated is almost a requirement, and Ty is more than pleased to be involved both in the planning of the events and the participation of the Hathor priestesses. Two are her special favourites: the Valley Feast and the Festival of Drunkenness.

The Valley Feast involves the images of the god Amun-Re, along with his wife and son, Mut and Khonsu, being placed on ceremonial barques at Karnak, and crossing the river to visit the various memorial temples on the west bank of the Nile. These memorial temples belong to the deceased rulers preceding the present pharaoh, Amenhotep, including a monument for his own father, the third Thutmose. Each has their own priesthood whose duty it is to honour the king who is still a god in death as he had been in life. The most beautiful of the memorial temples hugged the base of a massive cliff. Awkwardly, it belongs to the censored female ruler, Hatshepsut. Its walls record her many achievements but her name has been expunged, her images smashed, and her priesthood dissolved. It is still worth a visit, as Ty has done many times. A shrine to Hathor was built on to the temple, even though it was clear that Hatshepsut had used a symbolic association with the goddess to legitimize her unconventional reign.

Gods carried in procession could also serve as oracles. It has been recorded that during public processions of Amun-Re in his shrine on the sacred barque, observers could ask yes/no questions to the deity. If the barque borne on the priests' shoulders dipped slightly forward, the answer was affirmative, if backward, then negative. Those who are cynical might suggest that this was an opportunity for manipulation by the priests, or was it just a matter of the bearers adjusting the heavy weight on their shoulders?

Ty and her sistrum-rattling priestesses provide festive sound and motion at each stop of the Valley Feast where praises are sung to Amun-Re and his family, and the deceased, as they spiritually celebrate each other. There would always be plenty to eat and drink at each stop. Ty especially enjoys the fine wine provided at the temple dedicated to the memory of the first Thutmose, and always makes sure she has her fill. The singers and dancers continue throughout the tour, but soon their songs tend to become louder and somewhat slurred, and their dancing less precise. It isn't only priests and their entourage who are involved in the Valley Feast. It is an opportunity for any Egyptian to pay respects at the graves of their deceased relatives.

Although many rulers of the New Kingdom built memorial temples to celebrate themselves in perpetuity, few survive today. Some involved the extensive use of mud-brick, which deteriorates if not maintained, or featured stone blocks that were quarried away in later years for use in other projects. Very little remains of the memorial temples of such New Kingdom luminaries as Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. Much of the grandiose memorial temple of Amenhotep III was destroyed in an earthquake and its stones used elsewhere. Two immense seated statues were most of what remained until recent excavations, which have revealed much more of the temple. The temples of later rulers including Seti I,

Rameses II and Rameses III were built mostly of stone and have survived well to this day but, ironically, one of the best-preserved from the earlier part of the New Kingdom is that of Hatshepsut, whose memory was supposed to have been erased.

Those carrying the sacred barques are expected to remain pure and sober, and although they might indulge in some of the delicious food provided, they are not to become intoxicated; the trio of gods require smooth and reliable transport, and cannot be dropped. In most Valley Feasts, some of Ty's fellow priestesses fall out along the way, too drunk to continue, and the entourage returning to Karnak is usually noticeably smaller.

The last Valley Feast was certainly memorable in that Ty could recall the details, and she couldn't wait for the Festival of Drunkenness, as she repeatedly tells her husband in her late-morning stupor. He doesn't look pleased. But Ty has an important position and, now in her mid-thirties, has been performing her role admirably for a number of years. Besides, in the Festival of Drunkenness, all over the land Egyptians get drunk and celebrate the gifts of Hathor, her husband included. Dancing and singing are expected, and drinking alcohol is mandatory. It really is better than the Valley Feast, Ty has concluded, as there isn't a lot of travel involved. In Thebes, one can celebrate in the streets, as most do, but for a truly ecstatic experience, a visit to the temple dedicated to the goddess Mut, the wife of Amun-Re, is necessary. If Amun-Re was considered the king of the gods, then Mut is certainly the queen.

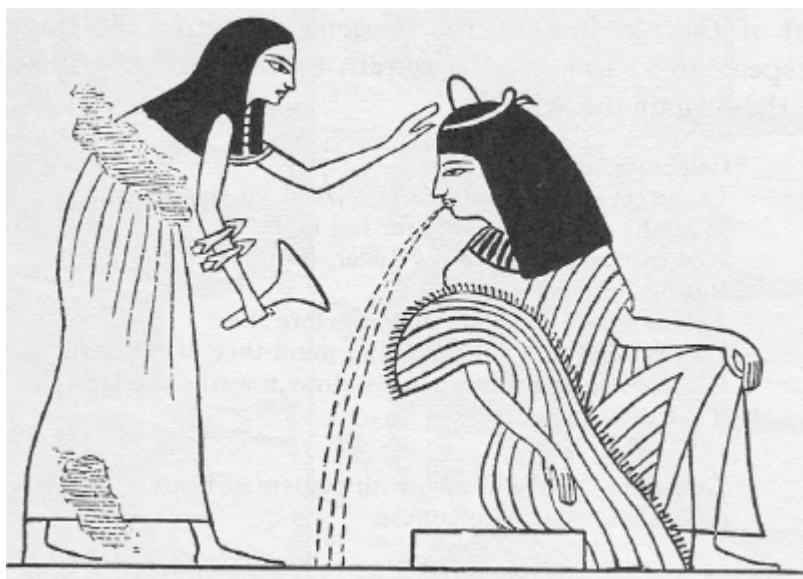


THE GODDESS HATHOR

Hathor's association with Mut can be linked to her fiercely protective and motherly qualities and her religious association with Re. An ancient Egyptian tale relates how Re became tired of humans so he set off to destroy them. As an enthusiastic participant, his daughter, Hathor, transformed herself first into the vengeful Eye of Re, and then into the vicious goddess Sekhmet, who is often depicted as a violent and intimidating lioness. As such, she enthusiastically participated in the slaughter and enjoyed the blood and carnage. Soon, Re felt sorry for his actions and, to stop the murder, he had to control Hathor. He did so by having a huge quantity of beer dyed red and having it poured into the fields. The goddess, thirsty and thinking it was human blood, sucked it up, became inebriated and passed out. Thus humanity was saved from complete destruction ... by beer. The Festival of Drunkenness celebrates this redemption and while Egyptian morals generally advocate sobriety in daily life, parties and special celebrations are the exception. This

particular festival also encourages drunken and public intimate encounters with friends or strangers, something normally frowned upon.

In another Egyptian story, the sun god Re is depressed and many attempts to cheer him up have failed. The happy conclusion to the story results from Hathor presenting herself before Re, and opening her robe to reveal her naked body. Re found this so amusing that he broke into hysterical laughter. Why this was funny can only be conjectured, but it did the trick, and Re got over his poor spirits.



THE PREDICTABLE RESULTS OF TOO MUCH CELEBRATING WITH HATHOR

Every year, Ty and her husband make their way to the Mut temple where copious amounts of drink await. With years of experience behind her, she always paces herself so as to stay genuinely drunk, but not to the point of total dysfunction, unlike some of her fellow celebrants. She also hates vomiting and never wishes to reach that point, but she does want to reach the point of falling asleep in the temple precinct. Apart from enjoying the inebriation, it is the hope of many that they will experience an encounter with Hathor herself in a sacred space – a rare ecstatic personal encounter with the divine. Ty never would admit that she has yet to achieve such a special experience, and isn't sure if her friends were telling her the truth when they shared theirs. Regardless, there is always that annual hope.

Each year, the worst part is the next morning when she and all those who had passed out on the temple grounds are awakened by the loud pounding of a drum. Many would have hangovers and prefer to be left alone, but the festival would be over and it would be time to move on. Ty would look around for her husband and hope not to find him unconscious and in the arms of another woman, but this particular celebration seems to excuse such excesses.

The site of Denderah in Egypt was used as a sacred space for several millennia including as a special place for the worship of Hathor. Today, it features one of the best preserved temples from ancient times anywhere, and it was dedicated to the goddess. Much of it was built by the Greeks and Romans who themselves had incorporated Egyptian gods into their religion.

On this specific day during the harvest season, the major drinking festivals are over although there will be many other opportunities for excessive behaviour. Ty and her husband are popular party guests, and Hathor, by nature, would expect her priestesses to have a good time. Happily, there is one such celebration tonight, at the home of an overseer named Userhet and, with any luck, the wine will be fine and Ty can once again practise in the name of Hathor.





7TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(12.00–13.00)

THE VIZIER HEARS REPORTS

Regarding the exact procedure of His Excellency the Vizier when he gives a hearing in the Hall of the Vizier. He is to sit on a backed chair, a reed mat being on the ground, the chain of office on him, a skin under his back, another under his feet, and a mat-work cape on him, a baton near him, forty leather rods laid out before him, the Chiefs of Ten of Upper Egypt before him on either hand, the chamberlain on his right hand, the Controller of Ingress on his left, and the scribes of the Vizier near him.

‘The Duties of the Vizier’, **TOMB OF REKHMIRE**

He has only been at work in his palace office for a few hours but already Amenemopet is growing weary from the barrage of details and decisions he’s had to face this day. As the vizier to Amenhotep, he is the ruler’s right-hand man and his responsibilities are both vast and paramount. Second only to the king, he is well rewarded for his efforts and enjoys many of the luxuries, benefits and wealth one would expect of his station, but the work is endless. Not one to complain too much, he long ago concluded that he works longer and harder than Amenhotep who of course was the ultimate decision maker – after all, Amenhotep is the divine king and saddled with the task of maintaining divine order in the universe, at least to the benefit of Egypt.

It helps to be a best friend of the ruler, the two having grown up together. That relationship was, in fact, the basis for his appointment. The previous ruler’s vizier, Rekhmire, had served quite ably and Amenhotep had kept him in that post for a while at the beginning of his reign. But Rekhmire was getting older and was also a part of what appeared to be a growing dynasty of hereditary viziers. Amenhotep put an end to that by appointing Amenemopet.

Another of the king's close friends, Sennefer, is Amenemopet's brother, and likewise holds a high position: mayor of the vitally important city of Thebes. It seems that the ruler values friendship and loyalty over hereditary traditions when it comes to choosing his closest advisors and administrators.

It was the usual case in Egyptian administration to have two viziers serving under the ruler: one with a jurisdiction over Lower Egypt (the Delta region) and a second with authority over Upper Egypt (the Nile valley). In the case of Amenhotep II, Egyptologists have found evidence for only one, Amenemopet, and it's possible that he bore responsibilities for the entire land.

Amenemopet's job is complicated. He receives reports from dozens of overseers of this and that and provides regular reports to the ruler. Although he is free to make numerous decisions on his own, those of personal interest to Amenhotep, or of vital concern to Egypt, would be made by the ruler himself. The vizier is also expected to hear and decide the most important of judicial cases, mostly those of rulings from lower magistrates that were now being appealed. And apart from that, he is expected to manage the royal estates, including the palace and its security, and monitor the treasury. Fortunately, the vast hierarchical bureaucracy beneath him takes care of most of the details.

The morning has certainly been busy and it would only be getting busier. Already he has heard reports from the treasurer, the Overseer of Granaries and the Overseer of Fields. The treasurer, Djehutynefer, presented his findings while several of Amenemopet's scribes sat on the floor taking notes. Djehutynefer came with his own entourage of scribes, some holding scrolls full of tallies while others recorded the proceedings. The news had been good, as it usually is, with the state coffers bursting with the fruits of empire. With special thanks to Amenhotep and his father, Thutmose, tribute from foreign lands under Egypt's domination is regularly flowing in and that trend is to be maintained to support the various building schemes and the opulence of the ruler himself.



SCRIBES TAKING NOTES

The Overseer of Granaries had had similarly positive news. The state-owned granaries are sufficiently full to feed those under its employ until the next harvest, plus a surplus. Bread and beer would be available without worry. There are some concerns with the physical maintenance of several of the immense storage silos on the outskirts of Thebes. A couple have domed tops ready to collapse thus threatening to expose the stored grain to the elements and consumption by birds and rats. 'You are authorized to repair or replace them immediately,' Amenemopet had instructed.

It was quite common for elite bureaucrats to have had many titles, which were often cumulatively listed on the walls of their tomb regardless of whatever position they might have had at the time of their death. The titles of Amenemopet, vizier of Amenhotep II include: Chief of the Entire Land, Overseer of Foremost Lands, Priest of Maat, One Who Hears in the Six Great Houses, Controller of All Kilts and Master of the Secrets of the West. His predecessor, Rekhmire, recorded over thirty, including Overseer of the Double Gold Treasuries and of the Double Silver Treasuries, Overseer of Crafts, Overseer of Archives, Master of Secrets of the Palace and 'He of the Curtain'.

Next, the Overseer of Fields made his appearance. One of his scribes had carried a heavy bundle of a half-dozen scrolls or so, cradled on his outstretched arms. Although Amenemopet appreciated the overseer's reports, he found them routinely tedious. Much of the information usually centred on taxation of various kinds of land parcels both privately maintained or owned by the state. Of course, there are untold thousands of fields of all sizes in all parts of Egypt, and a portion of their produce, especially grain, would be given up for the state and temple silos. Quantities of cattle, too, often feature in his reports and sometimes the vizier feels the overseer just likes to talk. It is clear that he enjoys his regular visits to the palace and perhaps wishes to prolong them. At some point, Amenemopet would always grow impatient and would ask for the grand summary, which in his opinion would still take too long to report.

This time, the long-winded Overseer had had an additional issue to present in the form of a land dispute between two prominent owners of large productive fields. Apparently a boundary marker had been moved to someone's disadvantage. Ironically, the boundary movement slightly diminished the size of the plot of the alleged perpetrator, placing a path used by a hippo well within the fields of his neighbour. The regular trampling had had an effect on productivity, and the neighbour was still expected to pay taxes based on the size of his plots. The case had been brought to a local judge who ruled in favour of the defendant but now the plaintiff was appealing to the vizier himself.

Amenemopet was already familiar with both parties. It seemed that every other year some dispute or other of theirs made its way up through the system to land in his lap. The vizier took a moment or two to consider the case before

rendering a verdict. As there was no extraordinary compelling evidence, his verdict was simple, if not punitive to both. The new boundary marker would be established in the centre of the hippo track. Amenemopet's personal scribe wrote out the decision and handed it to the overseer before dismissing him with an irritated remark: 'And I don't ever want to hear from either of those two again nor anything involving hippos!'

Do not displace the surveyor's marker on the boundaries of the arable land, nor alter the position of the measuring line. Do not covet a single cubit of land, nor encroach on the boundaries of a widow, for one who transgresses the furrow shortens a lifetime, and one who acquires by deceptive means, will be lassoed by the might of the moon ... Be careful not to topple over the boundary markers of the fields, not fearing that you will be brought to court.

THE INSTRUCTION OF AMENEMOPET

Already exhausted from tedium, the one official that the vizier actually finds fascinating is the Overseer of Royal Works, who now comes before him. Receiving updates on the construction of such things as temples, palaces and royal statuary would always feel like progress was being made and even the occasional problems could involve challenging but satisfying solutions. There are two small obelisks being created at a quarry down south, and a new palace being built up north, both of which were reported to be successfully underway. Of special interest is the construction of Amenhotep's own royal tomb in the Place of Secrets, the royal cemetery whose details are known but to a few. As vizier, Amenemopet has been privileged to visit the building site on a number of occasions as the tomb has gradually grown in size. And on a personal note, he had previously asked the overseer to put an architect and work crew to work on building his own tomb in the growing cemetery for wealthy bureaucrats. His predecessor, Rekhmire, had certainly done so and the tomb of his brother, Sennefer, was well underway.

The tomb of Amenemopet's predecessor, Rekhmire, is incredibly decorated with scenes of crafts and professional activities of all sorts, some of which serve as illustrations in this book. The tomb of his brother, Sennefer, is likewise extraordinary, with smoothed and plastered irregularities in its ceiling allowing for the painting of grape clusters with a feeling of three dimensions.

Amenemopet's tomb would be carved into the rock next to the tomb of his brother and it would be on a par with his status as a vizier. Its chapel walls would be covered with texts noting his accomplishments and scenes of a

splendid Afterlife. It is far from being finished but hopefully all would be in order on that unknown day when his own mummification was complete and his body was ready to be installed therein for eternity.

The meeting with the Overseer of Royal Works is a short, pleasant and refreshing exchange, and when the official departs, Amenemopet traverses the palace to the king's chamber from which he hears some laughing. Peeking his head through the curtain, he notices the steward and fan-bearer, Kenamun, sitting in one of the king's chairs while Amenhotep sits on the edge of his bed after recently awakening from a nap. 'Paity!' calls the king, using the vizier's personal nickname, meaning 'companion'. 'Kenamun was just telling me about the dispute about the boundary marker and the hippo! Won't those two ever stop?'

'I see that Kenamun enjoys listening to my business,' replies Amenemopet half-seriously. Kenamun, too, was a childhood friend of both him and the king so little offence is meant.

'So what's the report?' enquires Amenhotep.

'All is fine in Egypt at the moment,' comes the vizier's reply. 'All is fine. However, shortly we need to walk to the Audience Hall. The treasurer has arranged for a presentation of tribute. Everything is ready when you are.'

Amenemopet knows that, of all the royal activities that take place in the palace, this is Amenhotep's favourite. Often new and sometimes bizarre items would appear but, even if not, the king would take delight in seeing strange animals and the exotic dress of the captives or tribute bearers bringing their gifts.

Even though Amenemopet constructed an elaborate tomb for himself in a hillside on the west bank of Thebes where many wealthy bureaucrats were buried, he would be buried elsewhere. In a gesture of extreme respect, he was ultimately buried in a tomb in the royal cemetery, an honour accorded to few outside the familial circle of the king. In comparison to his originally intended burial place, his tomb in the Valley of the Kings is very simple, composed of a plain shaft and a single undecorated chamber, but it lies in close proximity to the grandiose royal tomb of the ruler he served, Amenhotep II. When discovered in 1906, the tomb was found to have been violently robbed (as were most tombs in the Valley), but the mummy of Amenemopet remained, lying on the floor, along with several objects bearing his name. The author of this book re-excavated the tomb in 2009 and many of the ransacked burial items were still inside.





8TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(13.00–14.00)

THE FAN-BEARER LOOKS ON

The ruler, Aakheperure Amenhotep, strolls across the palace compound to the Audience Hall accompanied by his vizier, Amenemopet. Kenamun, the duly appointed Fan-Bearer on the Right, follows directly behind, keeping perfect pace while expertly shading and cooling his ruler with a large fan composed of exotic wood gilded in gold and bedecked with ostrich plumes. Everything looks typically perfect and worthy of a divine ruler, Kenamun thinks, and is sure to impress even the most spoiled or sceptical of foreign leaders. The exterior gates to the Hall are still closed and a double line of armed soldiers bearing spears and shields begins to form an intimidating corridor leading to it.

Entering the large room, Amenhotep is greeted by the treasurer, Djehutynfer, who understatedly promises an impressive show of newly acquired goods. A dozen scribes sit attentively along two of the walls, their legs crossed and a sheet of papyrus spread across their kilts at the ready. Towards the back of the Audience Hall, a gilded throne sits on an elevated dais, positioned in such a way that a beam of sunlight from a slot-like window would strike the king, giving him an otherworldly glow guaranteed to convince visitors that they are in the presence of divinity. Kenamun follows as the king takes his place and a chamberlain rushes forward to place a footrest beneath his feet, one embellished with the incised depiction of a Nubian and an Asiatic, two categories of Egypt's despised enemies, symbolically trampled whenever Amenhotep takes his seat. Another chamberlain gently places the double crown on his ruler's head before retreating to the wings.

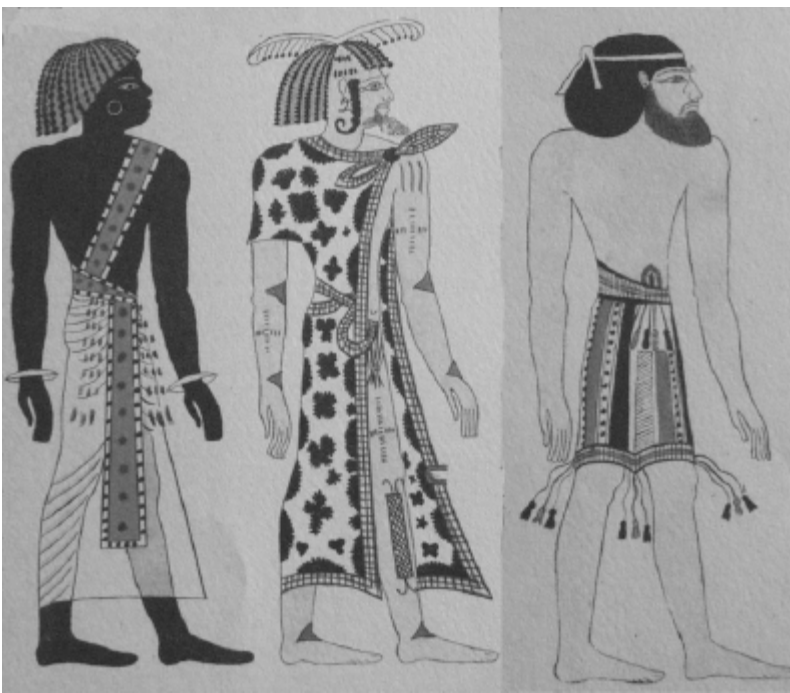
There were several crowns that could be worn by the ruler of Egypt. A red crown which rose to an upward point at the back, represented Lower Egypt, while a crown resembling a white bowling pin symbolized Upper Egypt. Worn together, the double crown reinforced the ever-repeated notion that the king was the Lord of the Two Lands. The ruler might also

wear a cloth headdress, with a golden band holding it in place. A special blue crown was often worn while engaged in warfare, and for some public appearances.

Kenamun takes his own place, slightly behind and a little to the right of the throne, gently and rhythmically waving his fan, being careful to avoid the tall crown. Even though they are best friends, it is essential that Kenamun maintains a strictly obsequious demeanour in the presence of Amenhotep when the king is in public and likewise restrain his excitement for what will be taking place in the coming hour. Another fan-bearer takes his place on the left of the king and the cumulative effect projects stunning prestige and power.

Although fan-bearers had been a regular component of the ruler's entourage for centuries, the title 'Fan-Bearer on the Right' first appears during the reign of Amenhotep II. Given the physical closeness of such individuals to the ruler, and their attendance at official occasions, they must have been loyal and highly trusted.

With everything in place, the treasurer, Djehutynefer, asks Amenhotep if he is ready, while Kenamun and his fellow fan-bearer strike an appropriately serious stance. The king nods and the order is given to open the gates and allow a slow, controlled procession to enter the Audience Hall. The treasurer announces each group of representatives who would be allowed to catch a glimpse of the resplendent pharaoh, an awesome if not terrifying sight that would be excitedly shared if or when the foreigners returned home. Looking directly at the ruler or addressing him personally would not be allowed.



FOREIGNERS WERE USUALLY CONSIDERED AGENTS OF CHAOS. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: NUBIANS, LIBYANS AND ASIATICS, AS DEPICTED IN THE TOMB OF THE RULER, SETI I

First in the Hall is a group of Nubians accompanied by a squad of Egyptian soldiers and a scribe who serves as a translator. ‘Behold! Representatives of wretched Nubia!’ announces Djehutynefer. Three or four at the front are wearing white kilts and have feathers stuck into their short black hair, and are ornamented with ivory necklaces and earrings. Kenamun, still gently fanning the king, realizes from their attire that they must be chiefs. After approaching the throne, they retreat, bent over in supplication, to the entrance of the Audience Hall behind them, followed by dozens of nearly naked tribute-bearers, sweating under the weight of the baskets and jars perched on their heads. Kenamun is thoroughly enjoying the spectacle from his vantage point.

The traditional enemies of Egypt were known as the Nine Bows. There was little love for the occupants of foreign lands, and their submission and humiliation was constantly reinforced in royal art. Temple walls were embellished with scenes of their death at the hands of the ruler himself, or their submission and humiliation, and the names of vanquished cities and tribes were proudly listed by name. Objects from the virtually intact tomb of the pharaoh, Tutankhamun, symbolically represented the degradation of foreigners, including sandals and a footstool whose use put the enemies literally under the ruler’s feet.

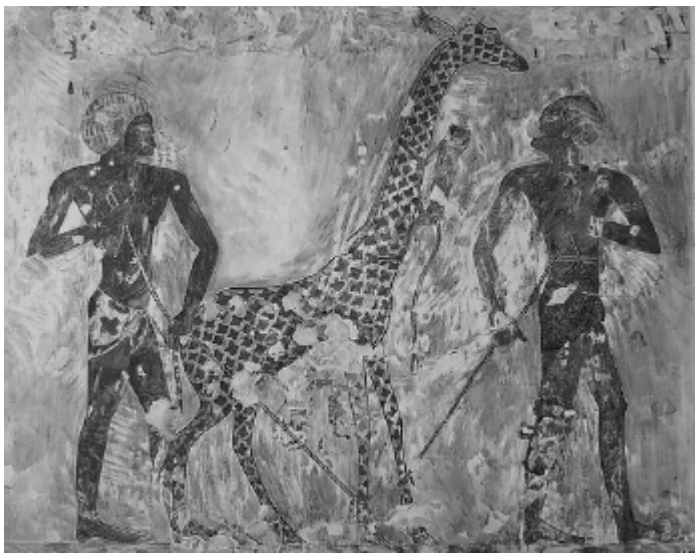
Through their translator, the chiefs describe their gifts. First, a number of baskets are placed on the floor in front of the dais and are filled to their rims

with pulverized gold from several jars. A few more contain random assortments of gold jewellery no doubt collected from individual Nubians back home. Then a score of bare-chested women are paraded slowly before the throne for consideration as servants or concubines. After examination, each makes a quick exit.

Next come dozens of men carrying over their shoulders cut logs of ebony wood, which are piled neatly off to the side before the bearers turn about and exit. Several beautiful trees are brought in, being supported by horizontal poles, their bases set in dirt-filled baskets, and then several bundles of feathers from exotic birds. And next stacks of panther and cheetah skins along with elephant tusks, each one of them no doubt acquired at great risk to their Nubian hunters.

Thutmose III, father of Amenhotep II, maintained his own botanical garden housing exotic trees and plants from all over Egypt's empire. Depictions of his collection were recorded in one of the chambers he constructed at the expanding Karnak temple complex on the east bank of the Nile.

The parade of exotic goods from Nubia continues. A dozen ostriches march into the room, each restrained by at least one handler. Both their feathers and eggs are valued and, if cared for properly, the birds might survive in the confines of their pens. And then some huge baboons, likewise on leashes, strut forward looking every which way, while each handler has a small monkey on his shoulder. Kenamun hates monkeys of all kinds and sizes, and they seem to hate him, too. Several of them could be seen roaming the palace as Amenhotep finds them amusing and considers them to be his personal pets. The Nubian baboons are allegedly tame, but they are still very unpredictable, often mean and somewhat destructive. 'I bet they've been trained to hate Egyptians!' Kenamun muses.



NUBIAN TRIBUTE-BRINGERS PRESENT A GIRAFFE

Following the monkeys are creatures much more to Kenamun's liking. A pair of baby lions walk side-by-side, looking absolutely noble even while panting in the heat. And then a pair of young giraffes, animals that the Egyptians find interesting, but have a hard time caring for. Directly behind is the last item of Nubian tribute for the month: an adolescent black panther with an embossed leather collar, its sleek fur and yellow eyes drawing a gasp from many of those assembled. Kenamun loves cats of all sizes but is especially fond of the smaller, more domestic varieties. It is easy to be afraid of or annoyed by many of the animals found in Egypt, but cats are different. They could be independent and endearing with the bonus of catching and killing small vermin, and their bites and scratches are rarely fatal.

An appreciation for cats in Egypt is well documented. At least two deities represented felines: the fierce warlike lioness, Sekhmet, and Bastet, who took the form of a small domestic cat, but both were regarded as warlike and protective. Several cat mummies have been discovered in their own wooden coffins, and thousands have been found in a cemetery of votive offerings dedicated to Bastet. Prince Thutmose, a great-grandson of Amenhotep who didn't live to become king, had a beloved pet cat for whom he had a beautiful carved and inscribed limestone coffin made.

After what has seemed like an endless stream of Nubian treasures, a parade of well-ordered Egyptians arrives to remove the tribute. Kenamun sees Amenemopet give Amenhotep a knowing smile. They both love the produce of Nubia. When the Audience Hall is finally cleared, it is time for the next regional group to present their goods. They are representatives of a number of

‘vile Asiatic cities, towns and tribes’, it is announced, each owing tribute demanded by the invading Egyptians. Amenhotep has no love for any of them; he has seen many Egyptians killed in battle with these very people. A couple of dozen with long hair, beads and colourful kilts and shirts march in and form two lines in front of the throne. ‘Place yourselves down before the living god Horus, Aakheperure!’ orders Amenemopet, and his words are immediately conveyed via the interpreters. ‘Down! Crawl! Stop!’ Amenhotep looks down expressionless as one with supreme power might. Kenamun holds back a chuckle while watching the spectacle. After several minutes nervously prone, the chiefs are dismissed with a curt, ‘Go home! Tell your people what you have seen in Egypt. Return with fear and respect! Go!’ They slowly rise, heads bowed, and back their way out of the room.

Immediately, the Asiatic tribute begins to arrive, and in great quantity. Basket after basket of confiscated or contributed finished gold jewellery is presented, personal items collected to meet their quota. This is followed by a few dozen comely women with long black hair and modest dresses, spinning slowly before the throne before making their exit. A stocky, scraggly Asiatic man marches forth with a black bear on a tether. The bear, moaning in discontent, surely isn’t enjoying the experience. Kenamun and Amenhotep’s entourage have rarely seen this kind of creature before, and Kenamun finds it fascinating. He recalls similar bears have mauled sailors while being transported, they are expensive to maintain, and their furry coats are unsuitable in Egypt’s climate. Nonetheless, they are interesting animals to observe if kept in controlled circumstances.

Kenamun is happy when he sees what is coming next. They will interest Amenhotep more than any of the incredible riches presented so far: horses! The king keeps a stable of the sturdiest and fastest, and enjoys their tenacity when pulling his chariot into battle. There must be a hundred horses coming towards them, each well groomed and many with a feather plume attached to its head. One after the other they slowly parade by the dais. The last dozen or so pull captured chariots with Egyptian handlers in control. Amenhotep would keep and train the best.

‘Anything else?’ asks the pharaoh expectantly. ‘Yes,’ answers Djehutynefer. ‘A delegation from Keftiu.’ Amenhotep has previously told Kenamun that he has no issues with the Keftiu people. They live on the island of Crete in the Great Green, the large sea to the north of Egypt, and trade peacefully with the Egyptians, most of the time. ‘Bring them in,’ orders the king.

The Keftiu representatives arrive, their physical appearance distinct from the Nubians and Asiatics, as is their dress. Unlike the others, Kenamun notes, they aren’t required to grovel, but kneel and bow. Their gifts are mostly in the form of jars containing wine, which are quite welcome. The vizier on behalf of the still-intimidating king sends them on their way and the Hall is once again cleared of goods.

Amenhotep rises from his throne and stretches his legs while the scribes scurry off. 'Are you pleased?' asks Kenamun. Before the ruler can answer, Kenamun offers his own opinion: 'Not bad, but we saw more a couple of months ago. Why didn't the Nubians bring incense? I would rather have incense than another pair of giraffes! And those Syrians; I don't like their beards. Someone should shave them. And where are the Libyans? Have they nothing to offer this time?' Amenhotep just walks away without comment. It has been a splendid exhibition nonetheless.





9TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(14.00–15.00)

THE GREAT ROYAL WIFE MAKES DEMANDS

Tiaa sits on her comfortable chair in a pavilion near the Nile, deep in thought while a couple of attendants stand nearby, ready to answer any request. Indeed, there would be some demands, but they would be addressed to her own husband, Amenhotep, Lord of Upper and Lower Egypt, and Son of the Sun. There are a number of items on the agenda including whether or not he views her as a threat to his rule. Amenhotep has continued the erasure of the memory of a female royal predecessor, Hatshepsut, but her reign is yet to be forgotten. There are just too many monuments to her credit including the gleaming obelisks that could be seen at long distances from Karnak. Her statues could be smashed, and her name chiselled off monuments, but there are still too many people alive from her time to wipe away recollections and legends.

As the Great Royal Wife, Tiaa doesn't want to appear to be too ambitious, even if she contemplates doing a few unconventional things. The lesson of Hatshepsut's reign is clear: women should not be the ruler of Egypt, for both traditional and even theological reasons. It is doubtful if it would ever be allowed to happen again and it probably won't, especially given that Tiaa has already given birth to several boys. And unlike some of the kings of the past, Amenhotep has yet to take on any secondary wives. His father Thutmose did, including three foreign women from Syria.

Some Egyptologists have speculated that perhaps Hatshepsut was planning to install her only child, a daughter named Neferure, as her successor. Neferure, however, seems to have disappeared or died while Hatshepsut still reigned, Hatshepsut having effectively grasped the reins of power from Thutmose III while he was still a child. The young prince was more than ready to rule on his own after her death.

As was the tradition, the oldest son still alive at the death of Amenhotep would be the next ruler. Tiaa definitely has her favourite, a congenial fellow named Thutmose who would be the fourth ruler with that name. And she likes the fact that when her husband dies, she would take on the role and title of King's Mother, arguably a role as powerful and influential as Great Royal Wife. Tiaa knows that all too well as her still-living mother-in-law, Merytre-Hatshepsut, is domineering and has much too much sway over her son. Among other things, she has demanded a tomb for herself in the royal cemetery in a location close to her son's burial. Tiaa feels she should have the same.

There are suggestions that there might have been some sort of palace intrigue involving the succession of Thutmose IV to the throne. A large stela erected at the Great Sphinx in Giza bears a text that goes well out of its way to legitimize his reign, and includes the story of the prince being contacted by the Sphinx as a god in a dream. If he were to free the Sphinx from the sand which buried him, he would become ruler of Egypt. Some Egyptologists find such a curious proclamation of legitimacy somewhat suspicious in its motivation.

When Tiaa made enquiries to some of the overseers working on Amenhotep's tomb, they revealed that some royal women had tombs in remote cliffs south of the royal cemetery. They had been constructed by tunnelling into the rock far off the ground to thwart their tampering by any who might wish to loot them. She now knows that a tomb was constructed for Hatshepsut before she became ruler and another for her daughter Neferure, and yet another for all three of Thutmose's Syrian wives. Such a remote location far from her husband's tomb simply would not do, concludes Tiaa.

Apart from Hatshepsut, there were very few women who served as ruler of ancient Egypt during its 3000 years of history. Clues exist that an early queen of Egypt, Meryt-Neith, might have had that role but her name is not mentioned in the ancient lists of kings (but then again, neither is that of the well-attested Hatshepsut). Another woman, Nitocris of the Sixth Dynasty, is listed, but there is no outside physical evidence for her existence. Sobeknefru apparently ruled for about six years during the Twelfth Dynasty. There was Hatshepsut during the Eighteenth Dynasty, of course, but some have argued that a later queen of the same era, Nefertiti, became ruler at the death of her controversial husband, Akhenaten. Another woman, Twosret, reigned for perhaps two years on her own during the chaotic end of the Nineteenth Dynasty. And then there was the famed Cleopatra a thousand years later. Despite her reputation as an Egyptian queen, she was actually a Greek queen of Egypt who presided over the end of 300 years of Greek rule during the expansion of the Roman Empire.

Living a pampered life with few active responsibilities other than bearing children mostly looked after by others, and making appearances with Amenhotep on occasion, there is plenty of time for Tiaa to think about things such as tombs. Or how Amenhotep is often off doing physically strenuous, if not dangerous, things for his own amusement, or to demonstrate his divine

abilities and fitness to the adoring masses. She especially deplores the archery from a moving chariot and she thinks that running is silly. Rowing, though, is fun to watch, especially from a luxurious shaded dais on the river's edge while cool breezes blow. She is, though, yet to be convinced of the legend of her husband's super-human prowess with an oar, nor all of his outrageous heroics as reported in battlefield legends and on temple walls.

Many of Egypt's rulers maintained 'harems', a facility where royal women and children could live and be attended by a contingent of obliging servants. During the reign of Rameses III, a conspiracy was plotted by one of his lesser wives who wanted to kill him in order to place her own favourite son on the throne, and the king's mummy seems to indicate they were successful. The details that describe the charges and verdicts against the conspirators have survived on papyrus documents. Although in most cases the specifics of the punishments are not described, they must have been severe, and some of the guilty were allowed to take their own lives.



TIAA, THE ROYAL WIFE OF AMENHOTEP II

Another thing that annoys Tiaa is Amenhotep's pets. There are a number of overly well-fed and well-groomed hunting hounds that are sleek and eager to please. Occasionally, Amenhotep would allow them into the royal residency where they would sprint about the palace to the delight of their master. And

even when they are outside, one would often hear their yipping in the distance. And then there are the monkeys. Tiaa does not care the least bit for them nor understand their attraction, and to let them roam about the palace compound? More than once she had insisted that her husband rid himself of his unpredictable and frisky companions but to no avail. At times she would visit another palace without him, but when she returned, the pets would always still be here, and often there were additions to the collection.

Although she has been away from the palace for most of the day, Tiaa knows what went on earlier. It was yet another grandiose presentation of tribute by foreigners. She finds this sort of display rather distasteful with their exceptional amount of noise, sweat and unusual odours, all influenced by a tinge of fear at being in the presence of Egypt's ruler and his intimidating soldiers and bureaucrats. She does, however, appreciate some of the humbly presented luxury items, and when all had cleared out of the residence, Amenhotep would let her plough through the baskets of foreign jewellery to select anything she liked.

A messenger arrives to inform the queen that her husband would be coming by soon. Just a few minutes later, the sound of laughing announces his arrival. Amenhotep looks delighted as does his vizier, Amenemopet, and his close friend, Kenamun. 'He sees more of them than he does me!' she thinks. Following the three men are several soldiers tending leashes. Just as Tiaa dreaded, there are more animals. 'Look, Tiaa!' said Amenhotep by way of greeting. 'A bear from Syria! Make him stand on his back legs,' commands the king. One of the soldiers slaps the bear with a stick and the animal stands tall for a few moments before returning to his natural stance. Tiaa had seen it all before and isn't impressed.

Baby giraffes follow, which Tiaa feels are like so many other animals: often cute when small but lose much of their appeal when they become adults. Thus far, the small menagerie is obnoxious yet tolerable but, soon enough, the dreaded monkeys make their appearance. Even with leashes, their incessant leaping and quick motions, and endless chattering, provide no end of annoyance.

Three small undecorated tombs in the Valley of the Kings remain somewhat of a puzzle to archaeologists. Located close to the tomb of Amenhotep II, each contained the mummies of monkeys and, in one case, a dog as well. The sharp canine teeth of some of the animals had been removed, perhaps to make them safer in the company of humans. Their proximity to Amenhotep's tomb suggests a connection. Could they have been his pets? Or those of another ruler? Or could they serve some sort of ritual purpose?

Amenhotep could read the irritation on his queen's face. 'Today's contributions were excellent! And you should see the jewellery. Come back to the palace and take a look!'

'I'd like to have a few words alone with you first,' replies Tiaa.

Amenhotep orders the others to take the animals away and, once they are outside of hearing range, Tiaa begins her short list of demands.

‘First, I want a tomb in the royal cemetery. I don’t wish to be interred in some horrible remote cliff near your father’s many women.’

Amenhotep appears to think for a moment but then agrees without too much hesitation. ‘I can arrange for that. It will be suitable, but don’t expect it to be grandiose like mine. I am the Living Horus, remember?’

Next, Tiaa once again insists on assurance that she would remain the sole wife and not have competition with other lesser queens, nor have to deal with offspring produced by them. Nor does she want him to receive gifts of foreign princesses as his father did. Nor does she want him associating with the dozens of naked women presented to him during the tribute presentations. She wants to be taken care of, too.

She holds her breath for her husband’s response. Thankfully, Amenhotep offers his promise that one queen will be sufficient. ‘You are a great queen and a great royal wife and I can imagine no other. I will look after you.’

With that, the two embrace, Tiaa reassured he doesn’t view her as another potential female usurper, as demanding as she knew she occasionally could be. That said, she couldn’t resist whispering one more thing into her husband’s ear: ‘Get rid of the monkeys!’

Tiaa did indeed receive a burial in the New Kingdom royal cemetery known as the ‘Valley of the Kings’. It consisted of a couple of sets of stairs and corridors leading to a chamber.

Its walls were undecorated, which was typical of those tombs in the Valley that didn’t belong to the ruler himself. Archaeologists found the tomb robbed and damaged, but enough traces of burial goods survived to ascertain that the tomb did in fact belong to Tiaa.





10TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(15.00–16.00)

THE PROFESSIONAL MOURNER WAILS YET AGAIN

*I am with the mourners [and with] the women who tear out their hair
and make lament for Osiris ... proving true the words of Osiris
before his enemies.*

The Papyrus of Ani

‘Muss up your hair some more,’ demands Henutnofret, ‘you don’t look sorrowful enough. And take off that dress and put this on,’ she adds as she tosses a filthy kilt at her daughter. Henti slips out of her clean outfit and, like Henutnofret, winds a dirty sheet of linen around her waist. Bare from the waist up, they rubbed white dust on their chests and prepared to leave.

‘I hate this work,’ complains Henti, ‘it makes me feel sad and awkward. And look how I’m dressed or, should I say, not dressed.’

‘Maybe if you feel sad, you’ll look sad, which is what we want. And your dress? You wear almost nothing when you dance at those parties!’

‘That’s different, and, in fact, I hope we’re done with all of this quickly, because I’m dancing at Userhet’s banquet this evening.’

Henutnofret and Henti are professional mourners employed to wail and imitate extreme grief during the funerary rites associated with interments. Today, Ipi was being buried. Perhaps the most disliked man in Thebes, he had, however, a handful of influential friends and was very wealthy – enough to have a tomb situated among those of the elite bureaucrats. Not only did he have a bad reputation in general, his own family utterly detested him, especially his wife, Baketamun. Ipi had been perpetually drunk and enjoyed employing women for ‘special favours’, but for all of his wealth, he was cheap and shared little. Henutnofret knew that Henti had danced at one of

Ipi's parties and not only would the overseer not leave her alone (at the expense of paying attention to his guests), he had also paid her only half of what was promised.

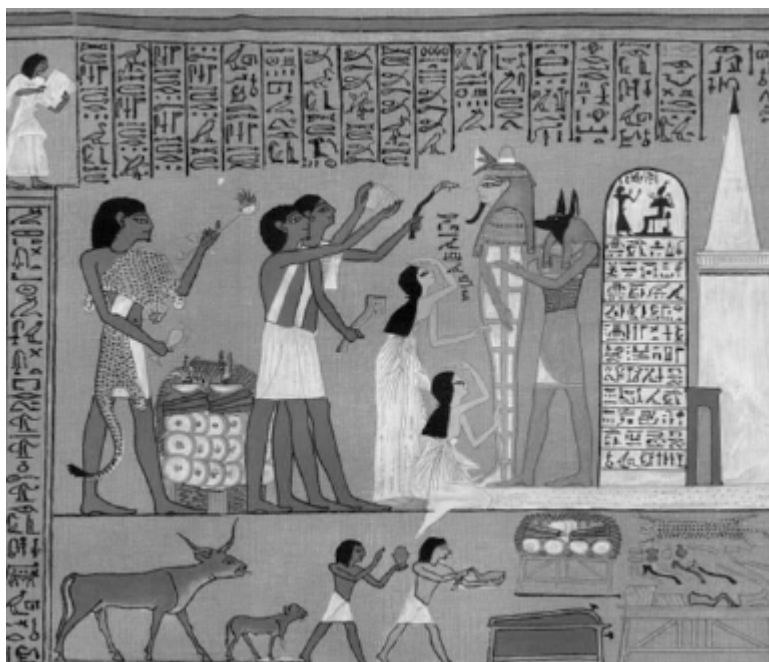
The mummified body had been delivered to Ipi's villa in the morning and was joined by his coffin and a growing assemblage of funerary goods, as well as some food. As Henutnofret and Henti arrive, just about everything is ready for the river crossing to the western side. Hapuneseb the embalmer is present, as well as a couple of priests to perform the rituals, along with dozens of men to carry and haul everything to the tomb. Baketamun stands apart from the others, including her husband's few friends, whom, Henutnofret can see, she also despises. The deceased's children refused to attend. This would be considered a shocking breach of normal decorum, because the eldest son is expected to act the role of a mortuary priest, but no one can blame him given his father's reputation. Fortunately, one of the other priests in attendance has been engaged to perform that function.

The coffin is placed on a special funerary sledge with a wooden canopy provided by the embalmer along with another to carry a chest containing the four jars holding Ipi's entrails. When Hapuneseb gives the word, all line up and the procession begins with several men pulling the sledges and others hoisting a selection of furniture and boxes on their shoulders. The priests lead the way followed by Baketamun and Ipi's friends, the procession of items, and lastly, Henutnofret and Henti. 'Make it look real, even if it is for Ipi,' advises Henutnofret, hoping that the notoriously cheap Baketamun will pay them both the full amount.

The shrieking and faux-grief attract the attention of those along the way, and the procession pauses for a few minutes to load everything on to the boats. Henti and Henutnofret sit silently as the river is crossed but resume the wailing as soon as they disembark on the other side. The road to the hillsides containing the elite cemeteries is both familiar and long, and there are a few short stops along the way to give the bearers and pullers a rest. The short breaks are a good opportunity for the mourners to show their 'anguish' by crouching down with their heads shaking in the dust and sobbing wildly. Henutnofret knows it is clear to everyone that the mourners are paid; not even Ipi's friends have reason to cry for him. Unlike the coffin and many of the other items, wailing women are very inexpensive. Even so, Henutnofret has heard that Baketamun has spent as little as possible. The minimum of useful household goods would make it to the burial, and few provisions were to be sealed into the tomb.

A friend who decorates tombs had told Henutnofret that, several years previously, Ipi, famed for his meanness, had nonetheless commissioned a tomb among those of the Theban high officials. He said it was of the kind not unusual these days – it would have a courtyard in front of a chapel carved into

the limestone hillside. The chapel would consist of a doorway opening into a narrow room, which extended to both the left and right. Beyond would be another rectangular chamber. Ipi himself would be buried in a subterranean chamber in the courtyard, accessible by a shaft that could be filled in and thus sealed.



**A FUNERAL ATTENDED BY PRIESTS, THE DECEASED IN HIS COFFIN, AND A COUPLE OF
WAILING PROFESSIONAL MOURNERS, AS DEPICTED IN A BOOK OF THE DEAD BELONGING TO
HUNEFER**

Her friend had laughed when he said that Ipi had made sure that his chapel, which would allow for him to be remembered with visits by family and friends, was beautifully painted on plastered walls with appropriate scenes to sustain him in the Afterlife; Ipi must have known that, in reality, few would care once he had passed on. Apart from depicting some of the highlights of his life, including a couple of encounters with Amenhotep, the walls were covered with images of Ipi as strong, handsome and fit, sitting in front of tables piled high with the best food Egypt had to offer. And if pictures weren't enough, accompanying inscriptions made it clear that not only was Ipi an important figure during his lifetime and beyond, but he would be well provisioned whether or not anyone cared.

The ancient Egyptians attributed a kind of supernatural reality to words written or uttered, or depicted in art. Painted scenes in many elite tombs portrayed an idealized Afterlife including offerings of provisions, thereby sustaining or enhancing the necessities of the

Henutnofret, Henti and the rest of the procession eventually arrived at the courtyard of Ipi's tomb, its chapel only having been finished during the period of mummification. Henutnofret sees that the courtyard itself is plastered white, as is the chapel's doorway above which are two rows of discs, each with a hieroglyphic inscription bearing Ipi's name and titles. The discs are cone-shaped, having been inserted into mortar. In the middle of the courtyard is a deep shaft and all the grave goods are set aside nearby.

Egyptian 'funerary cones' have been found in the thousands, representing hundreds of different officials, especially during the New Kingdom. As the facades of tomb chapels collapsed over the years, the cones fell to the ground and, being portable, they have been collected and sold by antiquities dealers. The exact purpose of the cones is still debated. Interestingly, there are names on some individual cones that are not associated with known tombs, thus suggesting there are many burials in the elite cemeteries yet to be found.

The functionaries and the bearers remove the mummified and wrapped body of Ipi from his coffin and place it in an upright position in front of the chapel entrance. Henutnofret watches as the lector priest steps forward with his scroll and begins reading the incantations. The *sem*-priest, who is practised in the mortuary arts and impressively dressed in pure white garments with a leopard skin draped over his shoulder, then comes forward. His presence is most important as he would direct the purification rituals and 'Opening of the Mouth Ceremony', which would reanimate Ipi's spirit and reestablish his vital functions.

Touching the mummy's mouth with an adze, and then a chisel and other prying tools, the *sem*-priest recites the appropriate spells. From around the corner comes a man with a just-severed cow leg – Henutnofret is sure that it is still twitching a bit – and this, too, is presented to the mummy. The slaughtered animal would be a delicious addition to the memorial feast to follow, and the leftovers would be good payment to the priests and the others participating. All the while, Henutnofret and Henti continue to alternate between whimpering and sobbing with the occasional spontaneous shriek thrown in for good measure.

While performing her wailing duties, Henutnofret would often reflect on the journey that her mourning accompanied. Ipi would now be on his way to the Afterlife and would have quite a perilous excursion to survive on his way to Judgement, which itself could be a nervous ordeal. Henutnofret had already noticed a scroll resting in a jar standing among all the rest of the burial equipment. The papyrus would be a copy of 'The Book of the Dead', which would provide Ipi with instructions to help him reach a successful conclusion to his journey. Judging by Ipi's reputation for frugality, he had probably bought the scroll for a bargain. If so, the writing would probably be rife with mistakes, perhaps just the effort of a scribal student wanting some practice.

Sometimes the name of another dead man would simply have been scraped out and replaced.

Travelling through the dark scary Underworld with its unsavoury inhabitants was an ordeal enough, and the right knowledge and spells were necessary to overcome the obstacles. The Judgement Hall, though, was where Ipi's ultimate eternal fate would be decided. There he would find Osiris, god of the dead, sitting on his throne with his two protective sisters, Isis and Nephthys, standing behind. Forty-two assessor-gods would also be present and would ask him if he had committed various wrongdoings while alive. One always denies each proposed wrongdoing. Ultimately, Ipi's heart would be weighed against the feather of *maat*, representing truth, on a scale overseen by Anubis with Thoth recording the proceedings. The heart and *maat* needed to balance or the consequences would be truly dire. Eagerly waiting nearby would be a demonic composite creature, Ammut, the 'devourer of the dead', with the head of a crocodile, the body of a leopard and the hind legs of a hippo. Should the life of the judged be found woefully flawed, his heart would be fed to the creature and the deceased therefore passed into non-existence. There would be no pleasant Afterlife for the wicked.

The Book of the Dead contains the 'Negative Confession' or 'Declarations of Innocence' in which the assessor gods interrogate the deceased. Here is a sample of the deceased's denial of wrongdoing:

I have not committed sin.

I have not committed robbery with violence.

I have not stolen.

I have not slain men and women.

I have not stolen grain.

I have not purloined offerings.

I have not stolen the property of god.

I have not uttered lies.

I have not uttered curses.

I have not attacked any man.

I am not a man of deceit.

I have not stolen cultivated land.

I have not been an eavesdropper.

I have not slandered.

I have not blasphemed.

I am not a man of violence.

I have not stirred up strife.

The various rites are now heading towards their conclusion, so a couple of porters climb down the burial shaft by means of small toeholds carved into its side. With the mummy back in its place, the coffin is lowered down with ropes to be received by the men below. Next to follow is the canopic box containing Ipi's organs, and then some furniture, chests of clothing, some baskets of food and some tall wine jars. And a small box containing little wooden figures bearing tools, *shabtis*, which will function as Ipi's servants. Henutnofret notices that nothing particularly valuable is handed down the shaft; Baketamun has clearly seen to that. Finally, the jar containing the Book of the Dead is placed next to the head of the coffin. The workers down below leave the chamber and close up its entrance with stones before climbing to the surface.

Henutnofret and Henti let out a few more squeals when the food for the funerary feast is spread out; they may be the only genuine outbursts of emotion during the entire day. Meat, fruit and wine in abundance. 'Thank you, Ipi,' mutters Henutnofret as she stuffs herself. Although spoken somewhat insincerely, it was probably the nicest thing anyone had said to the now dead Ipi in years.





11TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(16.00–17.00)

THE ARCHITECT INSPECTS A ROYAL TOMB

I inspected the cliff-tomb of his majesty alone, no one seeing, no one hearing.

INSCRIPTION FROM THE TOMB OF THE ARCHITECT INENI

It is a hot day as Neswy the architect trudges along the mountain trail, a journey he has been making every few days over the last several years; a journey that he feels he could make in his sleep. He certainly wouldn't want to do so as the path comes close to the edge of vertical cliffs dropping down to the plains on the west bank of Thebes. Down below he can see the memorial temples of the first Amenhotep and the three rulers named Thutmose, and quite prominently, the enormous temples dedicated to Hatshepsut and a ruler from a much earlier time, Montuhotep. He can see a number of attending priests coming and going from the various structures and there is much activity surrounding the construction of the present ruler's own memorial temple. Across the river, the Karnak temple is plainly visible with its obelisks shining brilliantly in the intense sun.

Neswy is on his way to what is certainly one of the most exclusive and secretive places in the land: the royal cemetery of the god-kings. Egypt's last several rulers are buried here, as would be the second Amenhotep. It is a remote desert valley, secluded from the public, who hopefully don't know of its existence. Rising above is a mountain that resembles a great natural pyramid, something that reminds Neswy of the fate of previous royal burial places.

Neswy had more than once travelled north to Memphis and, along the way, he could see the numerous pyramids built of stone or, in some cases, mud-brick. Some were truly massive and could be seen from miles away with

their white, gleaming limestone surfaces. Built as the final resting places of the pharaohs from years long past, they were truly spectacular but as Neswy had been informed, they were proving utterly inadequate in protecting their occupants. Visible to all, the pyramids stood like shining, inviting beacons to tempt any industrious robber with high ambitions. Beginning with the first Thutmose, the tombs of Egypt's rulers would no longer be on public display.



A DEPICTION OF AMENHOTEP II WITH THE GOD ANUBIS IN THE BURIAL CHAMBER OF HIS TOMB IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS

In searching for a good location for the royals' final resting places, those who had explored the desert canyons in the west where the sun sets in the land of the dead had several criteria to fulfil, including remoteness, good quality rock suitable for the building of a royal tomb, reasonable proximity to workers and an easily guardable position. One particular ravine fitted the bill, which had a pyramid-shaped mountain rising directly above, providing suitable symbolic value for all the tombs below. It was the perfect spot.

Neswy is the architect appointed with the serious task of supervising the building of Amenhotep's eternal resting place among his royal predecessors. It is a task with which he already has much experience, having been involved in the construction of the previous ruler's tomb. Building the new tomb is quite a process, which has thus far been underway for almost ten years. Hopefully it would be finished before Amenhotep flew away to the next horizon.

The trail to the valley begins at a very special village where Neswy lived, one unlike any other found in Egypt. It is composed of workers and artisans whose primary job is to carry out the construction of the royal tombs. With a population of dozens including family members, the village is located close to the cliffs, well away from the general populace and close enough to the tombs so that they can hike to work as often as necessary. As such, the village needs to be independently supplied with not only the tools necessary to do the work, but a lot of the essentials of daily life including water. The work is typically difficult and strenuous, but the workmen get the last two days off each ten-day week of the Egyptian calendar.

The village of workmen for the royal tombs is known today by its Arabic name, Deir el-Medina. It has been excavated and studied by archaeologists for over a hundred years.

Having been abandoned at the end of the New Kingdom, and situated in a dry desert environment, it survived well preserved, providing scholars with an extraordinary look at daily life from that time, although admittedly from an atypical settlement. With skills honed from constructing royal tombs, some of the residents of the workmen's village built their own tombs in the vicinity of their homes. Although generally small, they were usually beautifully decorated, and some have been found with their contents intact.

Neswy resides in the village and finds life there, at times, stifling. It is, in fact, physically restrictive and not everyone gets along. There are arguments, as expected in any community, and occasional disputes about compensation or the distribution of goods needed to sustain the workers. It is also an environment in which it is very easy for marital scandals and legal disputes to go public quickly. And if one wants to get away for an hour or two, there aren't too many options. Still, the village is well located. And it is a privilege to be there among those trusted and skilled enough to work on royal tombs, Neswy would attempt to convince himself after a bad day, an attitude he tries to share with his underlings.

Eventually Neswy reaches a low spot on the trail, encountering a small cluster of stone huts suitable for both guardians of the tomb and workmen. With cool winds blowing through, they offer an often pleasant place to rest or even spend the night if one did not wish to return to the confines and drama of the village. Just past the huts, the trail drops diagonally downward to reach the valley floor. Continuing on and rounding a small hill, the workmen come into view on an opposite slope.

The first tombs in this, the Valley of the Kings, are situated away from the valley's floor and directly under water courses that can become active during rainfall. They are natural features that provide a good starting place for the building of tombs, and debris brought down during the occasional rain might serve to further hide the finished and sealed tomb. Placing a tomb down below on the flat valley bed could expose it to wild flash floods that could obliterate anything in their path.

The past pharaoh, the third Thutmose, situated his tomb high up in the side of one of the valley's cliffs, an unlikely but easily protected location. Its design was impressive. Carved into the limestone, it began with a steep, straight descent down sets of stairs and sloping corridors. The slope ended at a deep pit, which could serve as protection for the workmen in the event of unexpected flooding, and also an obstacle to thwart robbers. Across the pit was the entrance to one corner of a small antechamber-like room featuring a couple of pillars. Here one must take a sharp turn to the left to continue on. The antechamber's walls were decorated with depictions of hundreds of beings noted in the *Amduat* – the ancient text reserved for royal burials, which describes the deceased ruler's journey with the sun through the perilous twelve hours of the Underworld's night to be again reborn with the sun.

Another set of stairs led down to the burial chamber, which featured two pillars and four storerooms. The chamber itself was extraordinary, with its oval shape representing a cartouche, an elongated version of the Egyptian symbol for eternity: a circle of rope tied into a continuous loop. Near the back was the sarcophagus of the king himself. Made from a single chunk of yellow quartzite with an accompanying lid, it too resembled a cartouche. The walls were decorated with freely drawn sections of the *Amduat* and its ceiling was painted to represent a starry sky. The entire tomb was stunning, it being an original design with no other royal burial like it. Amenhotep wants one very similar.

By the end of the New Kingdom, the majority of tombs in the royal cemetery had been robbed and the Valley of the Kings would soon be abandoned. Not long afterwards, a cadre of priests examined each tomb and collected the ravaged mummies which were then rewrapped and stored in a couple of secret caches to protect them from further plundering. The tomb of Amenhotep II was used for one such cache, and along with the ruler himself, sixteen other mummies were found within.

Neswy approaches the workmen, many of whom are busy hauling out basket after basket of limestone chips produced from the subterranean construction. At the sight of Neswy, they pick up speed to an unsustainable rate in order to impress. One man runs down into the tomb to fetch Gua, the supervisor, who minutes later emerges up the stairs, coughing and white with dust. The two greet each other warmly and Neswy asks how the project is coming along as he removes and unrolls a papyrus scroll from a satchel over his shoulder, revealing the tomb's plan. The diagram looks nearly identical to the layout of the third Thutmose's tomb but with straighter features and a burial chamber with straight walls and six pillars. Gua points to the final set of steps. 'We're here, and soon we will be forming the jambs for the burial chamber. Let's hope that our ruler lives long enough to see it all finished.' Neswy agrees.

The Valley of the Kings was used as a royal cemetery for most of the New Kingdom, about five hundred years. A tomb is known for nearly every ruler of the era but two have yet to be found or identified: those of Thutmose II and Rameses X. The two might have been interred in known tombs but, having left no surviving traces, the possibility exists that their burials have yet to be found. Scattered among the grandiose royal tombs, there are also a few dozen smaller undecorated tombs that belonged to other royal family members or special associates including Amenemopet, Amenhotep II's vizier.

Gua has his own copy of the tomb's plan; it was carefully drawn on a large flat flake of limestone, and Neswy knows that he keeps it in the tomb and consults it regularly. Gua supervises two groups of carvers, one for each side of a tomb's corridors or features. When a new section is started, a tunnel is dug, and a straight line inked down the centre. The two crews could then carve away in each direction to produce symmetrical features. It isn't all that difficult, but it requires regular vigilance to keep everything in order.

'Would you like to take a look?' asks Gua. Despite his position, Neswy really doesn't like descending into a tomb while it is under construction. The air is always full of choking dust and produces a haze that restricts vision. He prefers to visit very early or on the days when the workmen are resting and the interior chambers readily inspected. 'No, perhaps next time. Do you need anything?' asks the architect, even though supplies aren't part of his official job.

He watches Gua think for a moment. 'Yes, soon we'll need a resupply of lamp wicks and oil. And some more lamps as well. And the men want more water and some linen rags to clean themselves. And more beer.'

'Anything else?' asks Neswy.

'Yes, they need more chisels and wooden mallets,' explains Gua as he points to a large basket full of bent and dull copper tools and broken chunks of wood.

'Anything else?'

'The guards tell me they don't like the food and there isn't enough of it.'

‘More?’

‘Yes. We want two of the donkeys replaced. They complain too much. Too much noise, especially at night.’

Neswy decides to stop asking questions. Instead, he removes the small sack slung over his shoulder and takes out his scribal kit. After mixing up some black ink on his palette with a dab of water, he picks up a small flake of limestone and makes notes. ‘Lamps, wicks and oil, chisels and mallets, beer, good food. I’ll take care of this,’ he promises Gua as he packed up his items to leave. ‘I’ll be back in a few days.’

Crossing the valley to hike the trail back to the village, he hears Gua’s voice echoing across the way: ‘And don’t forget what I said about those donkeys!’



THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS TODAY WITH THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOMB OF AMENHOTEP II

Egyptologists have benefited greatly from the many hundreds of ostraca – notes written on scraps of broken pottery or flakes of stone – that have survived from both Deir el-Medina and the Valley of the Kings. The ostraca provide an unparalleled look at daily life in the village, but also many of the details involved in the construction of the royal tombs.





12TH HOUR OF THE DAY

(17.00–18.00)

THE CARPENTER FINISHES A COFFIN

It is the twelfth hour of the day when Nebseni and his helpers set down yet another finished coffin among half a dozen others in the covered area of the workshop. For whatever reason, there had been a spate of deaths of well-off people in the last few months and so the craftsmen had been especially busy. There had been a drowning, a murder, and several others had contracted diseases that the physicians couldn't cure. And then there was Ipi who fell off a wall only to be found a few days later. Nebseni, as a master carpenter, had just that morning delivered his coffin to his widow, Baketamun, at their impressive villa. A couple of months previously, she had appeared at Nebseni's workshop just a few days after her husband's death to order up a 'box of life'. He had already heard from the embalmers that she would demand nothing but the worst.

Nebseni had answered her request by proclaiming that all of his work was excellent even though it came in a variety of price ranges, from simple coffins with a minimum of embellishment to those with gold-gilded faces and hands and beautiful stone inlays. As predicted, she asked for the cheapest. 'Cheap like him,' she clarified as she tried to negotiate the cost downward; an effort that failed. 'It will be less expensive but nice, and delivered to your home in time for his burial,' promised the carpenter.

The solution to the problem had been simple. Ipi would receive a recycled coffin, the family who had originally requested it having refused to pay for it after it was finished. It then became mostly a matter of simply repainting the few lines of text over those noting the name of the other man.

Nebseni has a good reputation in the coffin-making business and today he is concentrating on fulfilling as many commissions for the burials to come as possible. He also is known for making expensive, beautifully constructed

furniture for the home or tomb of those able to afford it. He isn't greedy but, as a craftsman with high standards, he only wanted to work with the best materials. Unfortunately, trees do not grow in thick forests in Egypt. And they tend to be narrow and scraggly, making it difficult to extract wooden planks from them of any great size. There are lots of acacia trees along with tamarisks and sycamore-fig, too, and although usable, none are ideal for high quality manufacturing. For that, the finer wood would need to be imported.

The best source is a good distance from Egypt but worth the travel. In lands out on the eastern coast of the Great Green and inland from the area of Byblos (Lebanon), there are vast cedar and other conifer groves providing the ideal wood for the best items. Expeditions by ship to that region have been taking place for a thousand years with crews armed with axes, axe-sharpeners and ropes. After the trees are felled, the limbs are cut off and trimmed to be kept, and the great trunks dragged to the harbour. Those that can't be cut into logs or other smaller pieces on the spot could be towed floating behind the boats back to Egypt for further processing and distribution.

In 1954, a large sealed pit was accidentally discovered at the base of the Great Pyramid in Giza. When opened, it was found to contain the dismantled pieces of a perfectly preserved ancient ship made from imported cedar and dating back to the time of the ruler, Khufu (c. 2600 BC). The boat might have been buried as a part of Khufu's funerary assemblage and/or actually used to convey his body down the Nile to his burial site. The boat was 43.4 metres in length and included a cabin and long oars and its planks were held in place by ropes, which also survived well. It took years for conservators to put it all back together and today it can be viewed in a museum built over its site of discovery. An adjacent pit was also opened but the boat within was in much poorer shape, cracks having exposed it to the elements.

Nebseni had once worked in a shipyard where he learned a lot about shaping and sizing planks to construct hulls. Working with scraps and fragments of all sizes, he became an expert at cutting and drilling – and tying knots as well. It all helped out when he joined a carpentry shop owned by an uncle and learned the finer arts of making furniture and coffins. When the uncle died, Nebseni became the boss and owner, supervising a dozen craftsmen of varying experience. The workshop itself consists of a spacious walled courtyard where most of the work takes place, and a covered area with a couple of rooms to store tools and finished items.

When a project is requested, there is the matter of selecting available wood. The finest is the imported cedar with its wide planks and pleasant aroma, or else ebony. The latter is brought from foreign lands far to the south and is valued for its dark colour, strength and durability. Otherwise, there are the usual Egyptian options. The corners of the courtyard contain piles of scraps from other projects along with stacks of cut logs from various trees. In the centre is the cutting area where logs could be set on end and lashed to a sturdy post. Using saws, planks could be produced by cutting down from the top to the base.



A CARPENTER TRIMS WOOD

Nebseni and his craftsmen are experts at finding just the right planks and scraps to create any individual coffin or piece of furniture. Two irregular pieces of wood could be made to match each other using adzes and chisels. The adzes of various sizes consist of metal blades lashed with leather bindings to a wooden handle, which resembles a hoe; a large one could be swung for rough hacking while smaller ones are capable of delicate shaping. Their blades require regular sharpening, as do the chisels. Matched pairs of wood pieces could be joined and held together via mortise and tenon, dovetail joints or hard wooden pegs. The surfaces could be smoothed by hand with a sandstone block to produce a uniform surface. Any irregularities or blemishes in the material could be relieved by a thick or thin coat of gypsum plaster which could be beautifully painted.

Boxes, beds and chairs are the most popular kinds of domestic furniture ordered. Being rectangular, the boxes are relatively easy although a mix of wood such as ebony and cedar would require more care. If the customer wants inlays, the decoration might take some time, especially if it involves items such as ivory derived from hippo teeth or imported elephant tusks. The lids could vary considerably, from one that is flat, to others that give a roofed or curved effect. Most contained at least one mushroom-shaped knob on top and optionally another in front if the chest is to be sealed shut with a knotted cord and stamped clay.

Chairs could be a bit more complex and have various options for

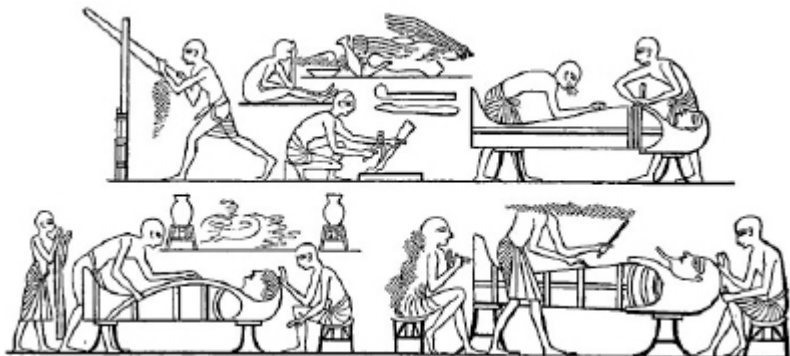
customization. Nebseni always requests information on the size of the individual for whom the object is intended. There is no use wasting time constructing a fine piece of furniture for an adult if it is meant for a child, or a dainty seat to be used in the home of a large and heavy man. Like everything else, the chairs could be simple or elaborate. The seat itself could be of solid wood or of plaited reeds, and the possibilities for decoration are endless. Very popular are chair legs ending in carved representations of animal feet, usually those of a bull or lion.

The artisans at Nebseni's workshop are well aware of some of the special advantages that they have over the average working-class Egyptian, most of whom have little if any furniture in their own homes and sleep on mats or thin mattresses. And when they sit, they either squat or set themselves down on the floor or ground. Nebseni's men could do much of their work from the practical comfort of short stools, which facilitate their ability to work, and if there are unwanted scraps, and the rare free moment, the boss would allow his crew to create items for their own homes. It would be good to be married to such a craftsman!

Nebseni looks at beds as another kind of luxury almost in the form of an elongated chair complete with four legs but with a place to lie. Typically they are low to the ground but served well their purpose of avoiding hard surfaces and nocturnal vermin which might traipse across the floor (and sleepers) at night.

Although Nebseni loves to make household furniture best, funerary goods are becoming much of his business. A lot of his regular products, including chairs and beds, are also specifically created for burial, especially if the family don't want to give away their still-useful items to be placed in a sealed tomb, thereby requiring purchase of new items. The master carpenter doesn't care how or where his creations are used; each piece would be good even if, like Ipi's wife, the customer wanted a minimalistic product.

Coffins require special care. Given their importance in holding the deceased's remains, their spiritual survival might partially depend on the survival of their physical mummy. Protective gods and goddesses decorating their surfaces are to guard the coffin's occupant and this is not to be taken lightly.



MAKING A COFFIN FROM CUTTING THE PLANKS TO ITS COMPLETED STATE

Nebseni discourages joking in his workshop regarding anything dealing with coffins, no matter the reputation or looks of the intended occupant. When it came to Ipi, the workers had a hard time restraining themselves.

‘I saw Ipi,’ declared one of the junior carpenters, ‘and he didn’t look anything like what’s on the lid!’

‘I’ve seen him, too!’ chimed another. ‘He’ll never fit into that coffin unless they cut him in half!’

‘Enough! Have some respect!’ yelled kind-hearted Nebseni, who knew very well that they were correct. Ipi’s wife wanted the cheapest coffin for her detested husband, but it would be the embalmer’s problem to squeeze him in.

Before beginning work, the estimated size of a finished mummy would be gathered from the embalmers who had, literally, first-hand knowledge of the corpse. Planks of the proper size and quality would be selected, or produced if needed. Wood from the sycamore-fig is popular and cedar might be used for the best. Unlike most of the coffins in eras past, relatively simple rectangular boxes are not the current trend. Instead, the coffin would resemble, more or less, a human body with a head and shoulders and tapering at the foot end. The end result would be an idealized vision of the deceased, no matter how old or ugly, to carry them towards the anticipated Afterlife.

Some of the earliest known Egyptian religious texts come from inscriptions on the stone walls of the later pyramids of the Old Kingdom (c. 2700 to 2200 BC). Very esoteric in nature, including rituals, hymns, protective incantations and descriptions of the king’s heavenly ascension, they were reserved for the god-kings, and at the end of the Old Kingdom, also for queens. During the Middle Kingdom, versions of these ‘Pyramid Texts’, supplemented with further material, were painted on the inside surfaces of coffins belonging to elite commoners. Not surprisingly, Egyptologists refer to these as the ‘Coffin Texts’. Some coffins of this period included beautifully painted depictions of offerings presented to the deceased. The texts and paintings together transformed a rectangular coffin into what resembled a tomb, in and of itself. The coffins, though, were put into their tombs as intended.

These sorts of coffins would require a lot of work, even given the seventy days or so needed for the mummification process. With shoulders curved and the head-end crowned, there would be a lot of shaping involved in both the box portion and the lid. Nebseni's men are certainly up to the task but it is time-consuming. Matching the lid and box would require care to produce a perfect fit. The lid would feature a delicate portrait of the deceased including the face and hands. These would be carved separately to be pinned into the lid and covered with a thin layer of gypsum for painting or gilding in gold. The popular trend also requires that much of the rest of the coffin is covered with a black resin. Down the middle of the coffin's lid and along the sides of the box would be painted lines of funerary texts complete with protective spells.

During the time of Roman rule in Egypt around the first centuries AD, many mummies were completed by the addition of a portrait of the deceased added to the head area of the wrapped body. The portraits were painted on wooden panels and allow one an unprecedented glimpse into the faces of individuals from this era.

Yes, for Nebseni it is coffins and more coffins to come. And even at an hour when most workers might begin to think about finishing for the day, he planned to stay open. He would normally send his helpers to the wood pile with a list of several names, wood-types and sizes. But today he offers his workers a surprise: 'Go home to your families,' he orders, 'we'll have an early start and another busy day tomorrow.'

It is one of the reasons the workers like Nebseni, he knows; he tries not to exhaust those who assist him. And Nebseni knows full well that he would need their help for as long as Egyptians pass on to the Afterlife.





1ST HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(18.00–19.00)

THE BRICK-MAKER WALLOWS

Magir the supervisor approaches the twenty filthy men toiling away in a pit full of mud. ‘You are all slow and lazy!’ he spits out. ‘You will stay here as long as it takes to complete your quota!’ Ezer and his good friend Jemer have no love for Magir whatsoever, and nor does anyone else in the brick wallow for that matter. The fact is that the three men had grown up in the same town together, in Shamash-Edom far to the east. Life there had been pretty good until the Egyptian army came to conquer and punish. At the time, Ezer was a successful merchant, Jemer imported wine and Magir made shoes as an assistant to a leather craftsman, and all three were more or less content.

The announcement that Amenhotep was coming again to their region had been met with great fear. The king’s father, Thutmose, had made repeated visits and any chance of escaping death and destruction required giving or at least displaying the appearance of cooperation. Precious goods were to be produced on demand and any later attempts at rebellion would be crushed. Those in Shamash-Edom, however, had had enough, and assumed that Thutmose’s son would not be able to hold on to the gains his father had made. They were wrong, and the city had been demolished. All its wealth was taken away, as were hundreds of women, children and able-bodied men.

The long caravan heading west would no doubt have looked impressive to an Egyptian eye, Ezer thought at the time, with numerous captured cows, horses and defeated Syrians who with their beards and curious clothes stood out dramatically from their Egyptian subjugators. The march to Egypt was arduous, with the troops showing little concern for their captives. They always fed themselves first and remained strong and healthy enough to chase down and kill escapees. The whole experience was humiliating, with donkeys loaded with some of Ezer’s recognizable possessions on a trek to an enemy’s land and an unknown future.

Sadly for Ezer, there is no end of need for mud-bricks in Egypt. Millions

are produced every year, and could be used to build everything from the simple homes of the average worker living in a village and the villas of the elite, to the great palaces of the ruler and temples to the gods. And there are plenty of storehouses and lots of walls. Even though typically composed of nothing more than mud and sand mixed with straw, the bricks are incredibly versatile and could be created in uniform sizes as needed by using wooden moulds. And there is little fear of running out of raw materials. The river provides mud and water and Egypt's boundless agricultural fields provide the straw that serves as a binder. The sun does the rest. Apart from their obvious utility, the bricks are also used to insulate enclosed buildings, keeping their interiors cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Not surprisingly, as Ezer has found to his cost, brick-making is one of the most taxing of the many strenuous jobs in Egypt. Mixing mud with straw is mind-numbingly repetitive and could be physically demanding. It isn't just the mixing; endless deliveries of straw are required and water has to be regularly provided to keep the mixture pliable and consistent. None of these activities could be considered pleasant. Even though the straw is delivered on the backs of donkeys, it is preceded by the obnoxious tasks of cutting or gathering, and loading, a process that might be repeated dozens of times daily. Providing water, too, could be extremely taxing, especially if the bricks are made at any distance from the river. Even if the water is nearby, it has to be repeatedly carried in large jugs on the shoulders of some of the sturdier members of the brick crew, and dumped into the mud to be mixed together by vigorous hoeing.



IT'S A DIRTY JOB! BRICK-MAKERS AT WORK

The bricks themselves are formed by packing the muddy mixture into

rectangular moulds, which could vary in size depending upon the nature of the construction project. With a finishing swipe of a wet hand across the top, the mould could be pulled up and off to produce a uniform product. The new bricks would be set in rows to dry beneath the Egyptian sun for a few days before being flipped over to ensure that both sides would be consistently solid. Upon completion they could then be collected by others faced with the physically draining job of lifting brick after brick, over and over, all day long, and then transporting the heavy objects to the construction site. Donkeys could be employed as could a yoke across one's shoulders with a balanced load on each side. As ordered, the bricks might be piled up to build a simple wall, or elaborately configured, with mud mixed with sand providing mortar as needed.

On their own, structures of sun-baked mud-brick might appear visually unattractive, yet they were utilized in countless significant constructions, including royal palaces. The bricks could be plastered over and coloured to provide impressively beautiful surfaces.

Upon arriving in Egypt, Ezer had managed to stay together with Jemer and Magir, and they were transported to Thebes where they were immediately consigned to work making bricks under the abusive direction of a low-end Egyptian supervisor. One day ran into the next and the three often chatted about their old lives in Shamash-Edom, wondering what happened to many of their friends and family members whom they hadn't seen since their capture and deportation. Talk of escape and a return home was unrealistic; a foreigner in Egypt was easy to detect, if only by their language, and the obstacles numerous. Occasionally, though, they quietly admitted that the climate in Egypt wasn't too bad much of the time, the food was tolerable, and there wasn't a regular fear of drought or invasion as was the case at home. But they certainly all agreed that they shared no love for their job, nor was their housing particularly good.

Ezer, like most of the unfortunates to have such a job, shares the floor of a small shack with other brick-makers, to which they return exhausted each evening. His daily ration of bread and beer is sufficient to keep his energy up and occasionally a few loaves and jars could be traded for some other commodities. He owns few personal possessions; anything of value had been confiscated back in Shamash-Edom, and not even clothing is much of an issue. Many prefer simple loincloths, which could be stripped off and put aside while the work in the mud ensued.

The majority of ancient Egypt's buildings were made from mud-brick and most have not survived the ages. Mud-brick erodes and disintegrates through time, and exposure to water, particularly during the Nile's annual flooding, is especially disastrous. The end result is that most of the surviving monuments are temples and tombs, stone structures built for eternity. One should be wary, therefore, of gaining the impression that the Egyptians were obsessed with religion and death simply based on the extant buildings.

In the last two months, though, Magir had apparently forgotten his beloved homeland and, due to his enhanced skills in ingratiating, he had been promoted to supervise his own small gang of fifteen workmen. He now commands the brick-makers as if he's the Overseer of Works himself, yet Ezer thought he, too, must be very aware of the consequences that might result if his underlings don't produce the necessary quantity of bricks. He'd probably end up back in the muck with them. 'Hurry up, lazy ones! I'm hungry and I'm tired of looking at you!' he orders as he struts about in a mud-stained kilt.

Ezer is disgusted and bemused; disgusted that his former friend Magir would treat him and Jemer in such a way, and bemused by how he has taken on a kind of new identity. He now insists on being called by the Egyptian name, Paneb, and would occasionally pretend that he couldn't understand the 'foreign' language of the brick-makers under his supervision. His attempts to be Egyptian are pathetic but it is well known that some outsiders who completely conformed and amalgamated themselves into Egyptian society could be accepted and live well, perhaps even rising to trusted roles. The Egyptians don't despise foreigners because of their skin colour or geographical origin: Egyptians consider everyone else as inferior in terms of culture.

Today, Userhet, a powerful Overseer of Works, is touring the brickyards. All the workers have been told of his coming and ordered to become exceptionally animated and dutiful. Ezer notices Magir sweating nervously as Userhet approaches with his entourage to view the production. 'Greetings, oh Overseer,' proclaims Magir obsequiously with his obvious, thick foreign accent, his wooden baton tucked under his arm. 'I am Paneb, and I am pleased to report that, under my supervision, my men produce their expected quota daily.'

'Paneb?' asks Userhet incredulously with a raised eyebrow. Jemer and Ezer have a hard time holding back their laughter. 'Paneb, then. It is very important that we not only have the desired number of bricks, but that they are of high quality. They will be used in expanding the palace of Amenhotep himself,' said Userhet.

'Yes, Overseer. Understood. I compel my men, vile Asiatics that they are, to do more than what is required, under serious threat of punishment if necessary.'

'As one should,' replies Userhet. 'As one should!' The Overseer of Works smiles before moving on to the next group of workmen. 'Nice work, Paneb.'

As soon as Userhet is out of hearing distance, the expected verbal abuse begins. 'Oh, Paneb! Have mercy upon us vile Asiatics!'

'Paneb? Does that mean "bad friend" in Egyptian?'

'We liked you better when you were called Magir!'

'For an Egyptian, you surely speak our vile Asiatic language quite

fluently. Why are you not a scribe?’

‘Twenty years a family friend, five years a fellow worker, and only two weeks to become a stranger.’ It is Ezer who utters this final taunt.

Magir would not have it. ‘Say what you will. I will be supervising a hundred men not long from now and all of you will probably die making bricks.’ The supervisor turns to walk away to take his seat on a brick bench nearby.

For many centuries and into modern times, the remains of ancient collapsed and decayed mud-brick walls and buildings have served as a ready source of fertilizer for Egyptian farmers. This practice, now banned, has left archaeologists with even less of the already scarce surviving evidence of Egyptian daily life. While some evidence was lost to this practice, the excavated garbage dumps from the remains of ancient towns have in their turn yielded a huge trove of discarded papyrus documents from the time of the Greeks, Romans and beyond.

Ezer could stand it no longer. Grabbing a healthy handful of mud mixed with straw, he heaves it at Magir’s back where it splatters into a sloppy mess on his kilt. Spinning around in anger, the supervisor demands to know who is responsible. It isn’t hard to narrow down the possibilities. ‘I suspect it was one of you two,’ he screams at Ezer and Jemer. Neither say a word. ‘Both of you, turn around now,’ orders Magir gruffly.

The two do as ordered and brace themselves for the expected crack of the staff across their calves. Instead, each feels a sharp shove against their back, which launches them face-first into the mud. The two emerge from the muck looking like twin creatures, with Ezer only distinguishable by his height. Several of the other workmen laugh until Magir counters with, ‘You may join them if you wish! No one is going home until we’ve reached the quota. None of you! We will stay as late as it takes.’ The workers have all heard this before and manage to find grim satisfaction in the fact that Magir wouldn’t be able to go home either.

Ezer lifts up a newly formed brick, fresh from its mould, but as he raises his arm to throw it at Magir, it falls apart in his hand, having not yet been baked by the sun. It all seems so futile but, in a few hours, the work would be done, finished in the night by torchlight, and Ezer would go down to the river to bathe, to wash off his body, encrusted with mud from head to toe, so as to be once again recognizable to start a new shift.





2ND HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(19.00–20.00)

THE LADY OF THE HOUSE PREPARES FOR A PARTY

If you are wealthy, and set up a household, be gracious to your wife according to what is fair. Feed and clothe her well ... Make her happy all the days of your life.

The Maxims of Ptahhotep

The sun would soon be setting and, although most everything seems in order, Nefret is nervous. Her stepson is to be married and the accompanying celebration is both expensive and elaborate. As the wife of a senior bureaucrat, the overseer Userhet, the best would be expected and there would be many guests visiting their villa that evening. The food would be plentiful including roast duck and beef, and there would be plenty of good wine, some imported. The biggest worry is Userhet himself, who over the years has become a bit spoiled and effete, much to Nefret's embarrassment. Too much wine, frivolity and young dancing girls and her husband could become foolishly jolly and occasionally belligerent; the planned evening's celebration would provide the perfect combination of factors for both.

The two married five years previously and Nefret is Userhet's second wife. His first had borne him only one offspring, a son, and then died in childbirth while attempting to deliver the second. Userhet is now well over forty years old while Nefret is barely twenty and the couple have already produced two children. Her father, a prominent scribe, had encouraged her to marry his friend, the overseer, despite his bad habits, desiring to extend his own family network among the elite. And although Userhet already had a son, he had been looking for a new wife who would be loyal, tolerant and most importantly, fertile.

With the exception of the royal family, most Egyptian marriages were probably monogamous and incestuous couples uncommon. Although one might have multiple wives, it was usually one at a time, and the boundary for marrying one's relatives usually did not step any closer than a cousin. The common practice of calling one's wife his 'sister' was more of a term of endearment than necessarily a genetic reality. The ruler of Egypt, however, might have a chief royal wife, secondary wives, foreign wives resulting from political alliances, and a concubine. Marriages between royal step-siblings, brothers/sisters and father/daughter are known to have occurred on occasion, thus keeping power and wealth within the family.

The act of marriage, as was common, was simply an agreement between the couple, the new wife moving in with her partner, bringing her personal assets to join her husband to form a new household. Apart from some very expensive furniture brought into the home with the joining of the two, Nefret also owns several very productive fields, which are tended by contracted farmers who are allowed to work there in exchange for some of the produce. This property, combined with that already owned by Userhet, made the couple quite wealthy and their home and lifestyle reflect this.

The collection of advice known as the *Maxims of Ptahhotep* provides a guide to etiquette presented in the form of an elderly father of the elite class sharing insights to his son. There are comments about responsibility, leadership and how to deal with people of different status. The several comments regarding women are interesting, including this bit of advice regarding one's wife: 'Do not condemn her, but keep her well away from power. Control her, because her eyes are quick and sharp. Watch her, and she will remain long in your house. If you are too strict, there will be tears. She provides wifely favours in return for her maintenance, and what she asks is that her own desires be fulfilled.'

Userhet and Nefret live in a splendid villa surrounded by walls forming a private compound. Upon entering its front gate, one encounters a lovely pool surrounded by well-tended trees and other plants. The home itself is certainly large and is composed of several spacious rooms perfect for entertaining, and a number of smaller ones for sleeping and storage. The ceiling is supported by attractive wooden columns and windows situated high up the walls allow for illumination during daylight hours. There are several beautifully constructed chairs here and there, and a couple of tables that indicate to guests that they are in the presence of wealth. Nefret knows Userhet very much wants to give the impression of a miniature version of the ruler's own Theban palace, a place he has visited on many an occasion.

Outside in the compound are several adjacent structures including a facility for making bread and beer, and areas for preparing other food. There is a large granary and rooms for storing beer and wine. One of the couple's fields is directly behind the compound so fresh vegetables are readily available, and a small herd of cattle is tended nearby. One of the cows met his end earlier that day and is being prepared for roasting. A number of servants attend to the tasks outdoors, but there are also several indoors, mostly doting on Nefret. They assist her with just about everything personal, including

bathing and dressing, and also literally putting food on the table. Nefret prefers older women working in the house as she is well aware of her husband's reputation.

The servants are very helpful in looking after Nefret's two daughters, they being two and four years old. The youngest is tended by a wet-nurse while the oldest spends much of her time playing with her dolls and a pet cat. They are lucky. Even at an early age, most of the working-class children of Egypt would already be assisting their parents at home, or in fields or workshops. Nefret is glad that Userhet's son is getting married and moving out of the house. He is two years older than her and their relationship feels awkward.

A number of toys from ancient Egypt have survived. There are simple dolls, for example, in the shape of a wooden paddle with some braided hair glued to the top, while other dolls are nicely carved with movable limbs. Balls seemed to be popular with their ability to serve in any number of games. The activities of older children often tended to be more athletic, however, including wrestling and acrobatics.

Nefret's tolerance of her husband is the price she pays for their extravagant lifestyle. She, too, had been brought up well and is accustomed to luxuries. Her habit of barking out orders to the servants is well honed from her father's home. Still, she wonders if she could have done better than old, bald Userhet. Why couldn't her father have picked someone less obnoxious? There is always the possibility of a divorce someday. It is almost as simple as marriage but with an agreement to separate and move out. Although she would retain some of her property and perhaps some of his, it would be uncomfortable, and there would be no guarantee that she would be able to match the standard of living she now enjoyed unless she was able to find another single, wealthy bureaucrat who wouldn't mind a new wife and a couple of children.

With the festivities to begin in less than two hours, Nefret makes her rounds. Everything has to be perfect, a fact she has made known to all including the servant in charge of cleaning. No detail would be left unattended. She orders furniture be moved to accommodate the musicians and dancers, chairs set up along the wall and tables, which will soon be covered with delectable food, to be strategically positioned. They would need dozens of drinking cups, and amphorae of imported wine placed in a room off to the side where a servant could readily provide refills. There would be perfumed waxed cones and lotus flowers freshly picked from the villa's pond to present to the guests. The smell of incense mixed with freshly cooked beef would drift over the proceedings.

Confident now that many of the celebration's details are under control, Nefret needs to concentrate on herself. Calling to her trusted personal servant, Iput, she retires to a chamber adjacent to her bedroom and disrobes. Iput soon appears with a couple of young women each carrying a large jar of fresh water. Nefret lifts her arms high as the water is poured over her head,

followed by Iput scrubbing her down with wads of linen. Next comes the dreaded part. All trace of hair below the neck would be eliminated. With the help of a sharp copper razor lubricated by oil and a pair of tweezers, the job is accomplished in relatively short order.

Afterwards, Nefret's entire body is rubbed with perfumed oil before she takes her place in front of a small table bearing a hand mirror and an ivory comb. Viewing her reflection in the mirror of polished bronze, she combs her short, wet hair straight. She doesn't need to do much more with it as an elaborate wig would be worn that evening, its beautiful ringlets dropping to her shoulders and secured with a colourful headband. It would be installed and adjusted not long before guests were to arrive. Next, her eyes and eyebrows are enhanced with kohl – dark green today – and then her lips accentuated with a mixture of red ochre and fat.



A BEAUTIFULLY ADORNED LADY OF THE HOUSE COMPLETE WITH JEWELLERY

Nefret is pleased with the results as she continues to fixate on her reflection in the mirror. Yes, she admits, she looks good, hopefully better than the others, and that is the desired effect as the mistress of her own house. There is still much more to do, including the matter of clothing. Nefret has several chests full of lovely garments but tonight she is going to wear a new, beautiful, pleated dress made of the finest, whitest linen. The best weaver in Thebes had finished it just that morning. Nefret was excited when the garment arrived a

few hours previously. It is simple: a large rectangular sheet of cloth, fringed on the edges, which is wrapped a couple of times around the body and then over one's shoulder and secured in front. No doubt there would be others at the celebration wearing similar outfits, but the accompanying jewellery is what will make the difference.

Nefret asks Iput to retrieve the special boxes. Inside is a small treasure trove of some of her favourite possessions and, with her selection already decided days before, she opens one of the boxes and removes a lovely beaded collar, which Iput holds in front of her to admire in the mirror. The collar consists of rows and rows of small blue cylindrical faience beads, interspersed by others made of red carnelian and coloured glass. Dangling around the edges are golden pendants resembling teardrops. It is vibrant and suitably expensive, and just the right complement to a bright white dress.

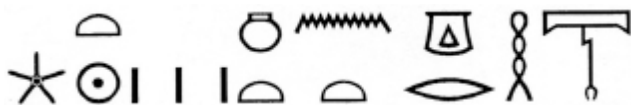
The collar is placed carefully on a table and Iput opens and presents the other boxes. There is a pair of golden bracelets and some elaborate earrings, which are also set aside. 'I'll be the most beautiful woman at the party, won't I, Iput?' asks Nefret.

'Of course you will,' comes the automatic answer. 'There will be many lovely ladies, but no one will compare to Nefret, wife of the overseer Userhet.'

'Must she have complimented me with reference to that annoying husband of mine?' thinks Nefret. 'And I bet he'll be wearing a wig tonight, too, whenever he shows up!'

With clothing and accoutrements laid out to be donned just before the celebration, Iput helps Nefret wrap a simple dress around her body. It is time to once again make the rounds, inspect and give orders.





3RD HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(20.00–21.00)

THE JEWELLER WORKS WITH GOLD

It is already the third hour of the night but thankfully the gold has eventually arrived. Without it, there would have been a day's delay in the special project: a set of beautiful jewellery for Tiaa, the Great Royal Wife herself. The vizier, Amenemopet, had ordered the set as a consolation gift on behalf of Tiaa's husband, the ruler Amenhotep. The vizier is a loyal friend and advisor to the king and at the slightest hint of marital conflict between the royal couple, he would turn to his favourite artisan, Puyemre, to create something special for his king. Word of the commission had made it down to the jeweller by way of the Master of Goldsmiths, who had sent a messenger to the workshop. This time there would be a lovely and colourful collar, and pairs of earrings, bracelets and armbands, and gold would be utilized in all.

Everyone loves gold, thinks Puyemre. It's bright and shiny like the sun and sufficiently hard-won that it really has special value. It is a sign of wealth and status to be admired – if not coveted. Even some dead people wear it, hoping to enjoy it in the Afterlife, much to the delight of tomb robbers. And for specialty craftsmen like Puyemre, sitting in a chair in the jewellers' workshop, it is malleable and easy to incorporate into nearly any product. It could be melted into moulds or hammered into shape, or applied in very thin sheets to wood, and it always looks opulent. The storehouses of the temples and the palace accumulate large amounts and would dole it out as the need arose.

The Egyptians referred to gold as 'the flesh of the gods' and silver as the 'bones of the gods'. The latter was rare and not naturally available in Egypt and, as a result, it had to be imported from elsewhere, as did electrum, a naturally occurring alloy of silver and gold.

Apart from gold, copper was also extensively mined. A combination of the copper and imported tin produced bronze, which could be effectively used in tools and weapons, and in

Although Egypt has its own source of gold, it typically requires great effort to find. There are mines out in the harsh eastern desert, a punishing place suitable for the foreign captives and criminals who are often sent out to do the difficult task. When a vein of gold is found, it is followed, often by constructing tunnels in the rock. The work is dangerous and exhausting, as blocks of stone are extracted from beneath the surface and removed outside to be further broken up into smaller chunks. These lumps are then pounded into smaller gravel and pulverized. It is all done by hand and, like quarry work, it involves pounding and grinding all day long. With the gold-bearing material crushed nearly to sand, it is washed on a sloping board to separate the gold from the stone. From there it could be bagged and sent under guard to the Nile Valley.

Mining is certainly tough but, as Puyemre knows, the king has other sources of the precious metal. It is seemingly plentiful in the land of Kemet's southern neighbour, Nubia. The Nubians, too, enjoy their gold and the Egyptians could trade for it or, better yet, take it from them through warfare or tribute. The same applies to the lands of the east under Egyptian dominion. Nearly every city or town, it seems, is expected to make forced contributions, often in the form of personal jewellery, to be delivered at a time and of a quantity demanded by their oppressors. It is one of the rewards of building an empire. On the other hand, gold has become a major ingredient of the diplomatic gift exchange with other kings demanding it from Egypt as proof of good relations. Puyemre is therefore all too aware just how valuable is the metal with which he so loves to work.

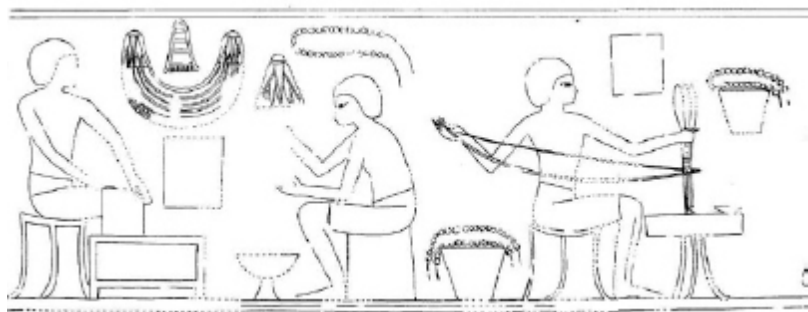
In 1922, when English archaeologist Howard Carter took his first peek into the tomb of Tutankhamun, he is noted as having said, 'Gold! Everywhere the glint of gold!' Indeed, the virtually intact tomb of the New Kingdom ruler, Tutankhamun, contained a vast amount of gold and gold-gilded objects including furniture, chariots and numerous funerary objects.

The innermost of his three nesting coffins was of solid gold, weighing around 110 kg.

As Puyemre arranges his tools on a low table, several craftsmen are at work on other projects. Some are pounding sheets of gold ever thinner into foil while others are bending and shaping vessels that will be used for temple rituals. Early that day, representatives from the treasury showed up with a bag of gold dust and a scale. With a scribe carefully making notes, the gold was weighed and allotted; pilfering is not to be tolerated by those who deliver or those who receive.

The dust was taken to a special furnace to be melted into workable ingots and sheets. The furnace would be stoked with wood charcoal kept at the necessary high temperature by using bellows, which would blow in air to

increase the heat. Occasionally, the gold delivery would be in the form of a basket of foreign booty with gems to be extracted from the confiscated jewellery and its accompanying gold transformed in the furnace for reuse.



JEWELLERS HARD AT WORK

Within minutes of receiving the assignment for the jewellery, Puyemre had already been creating designs in his head. The armbands would be of pure gold, but sufficiently lightweight so as not to tax the queen. The bracelets, too, would be made to match and all would be hinged for ease of putting on and removing. The items would be enhanced with inlaid alternating rows of beautiful blue turquoise and red carnelian; relatively simple but very elegant. On the inside of each would be carefully engraved the name of the queen and there would be no doubt to whom they belonged.

The earrings, too, would be relatively simple but attractive. They would consist of a coil of gold wire on which inlays of lapis lazuli, malachite and feldspar would be affixed to resemble a rosette. The broad collar, though, would be more elaborate with three double rows of teardrop pendants of turquoise alternating with circular gold beads. Placed below the queen's neck and hung over her shoulders, it would be held in place by a counterbalance in the form of a golden lotus dangling down her back and linked to delicate chains running from each end of the collar.

The dark blue semi-precious stone, lapis lazuli, was rare and prized in ancient Egypt. Often incorporating flecks of gold, it polished up beautifully and was a favourite material in expensive jewellery. Its source was far-off Afghanistan from where it eventually made its way to Egypt, perhaps after being traded through many hands.

Puyemre is proud of his work and actually has even seen it worn, but mostly from a distance. Although he is admired for his skill, there is always some snooty scepticism among the elite for anyone involved in the manufacturing of anything. The occasional commissions requested of individual artisans are always regarded as special and a kind of competition exists between the craftsmen when it comes to the ultimate recipient, dead or alive. Something requested from, or for, a member of the royal family, of course, would be

especially prestigious but the vast Egyptian bureaucracy provides most of the opportunities for unique creations.

Puyemre looks over at a couple of his colleagues, busy nearby, their unfinished projects in various stages of completion. One is fashioning a gold ring with a bezel in the form of a scarab beetle. It is for 'a senior overseer of great influence' but he won't reveal who. Puyemre sometimes wonders whether this fellow worker is actually producing something to take home to his own family, made from the various scraps of leftover gold. Another is cutting out very thin strips from a sheet of gold, which the jeweller says are to be formed into caps protecting the fingers and toes of a wealthy deceased man. This would help him to shine like the sun in the darkness of the Underworld. And even though their owner would never see the work – and nor would his family, beneath the layers of linen wrapping – the jeweller appears to be diligently performing his task with great skill.

Puyemre really doesn't like creating jewellery for the dead. It seems such a waste to see his creations used in such a way. He much prefers that the living could enjoy his beautiful output, into which he put so much care. And if he had his way, he wouldn't be involved with anything but the finest materials and that meant gold, silver and the best stones. For this particular commission, Amenemopet had explicitly stated, 'no faience' and 'no glass'. Puyemre is more than happy to oblige.

Faience, or 'glazed composition', is a ceramic-like material of finely ground sand or quartz that can be made into a paste and formed into a wide variety of objects and then fired. It is recognizable by its glassy glazed surface, which is typically in the broad colour spectrums of greens and blues. Faience was relatively inexpensive to produce and could be used in the mass-production of beads and amulets.



JEWELLERS DRILL AND STRING BEADS TO PRODUCE A LOVELY COLLAR

Looking around the workshop, Puyemre really isn't envious of anyone's abilities. As a child, he was involved in some of the lowlier repetitive tasks

such as pressing faience into moulds, helping with the furnaces and stringing cheap beads for inexpensive necklaces. His least favourite activity was drilling stone beads of various hardness. There seemed to be an endless demand and many of the possible mistakes were not easy to repair as beads couldn't be re-melted like gold. The supervisors could be ruthless in their criticism but also generous with praise as needed.

Eventually, Puyemre was allowed to work with a goldsmith and his talent for creativity was noticed. From cheap burial amulets to royal requests, it had been a long apprenticeship and now the recognition is satisfying.

Puyemre sits down on a low stool and begins his work. With the gold now available, including a small hammered sheet, he decides to begin with the armbands, which would be simple and relatively easy to produce but elegant. Previous experience with Amenemopet had revealed the vizier's impatience, and now with some of the jewellery actively in production, it will be easy to claim that all is underway and that the results will indeed be fit for a queen.

In 1925, an expedition from Harvard University working on the Giza plateau accidentally found an extraordinary tomb. A deep shaft led to a small chamber, much of its floor covered with delicate gold leaf. The evidence indicated that this was the burial of Queen

Hetepheres, the mother of Khufu who built the nearby Great Pyramid. The gold had originally been gilded on to the wooden surface of the queen's furniture, but the wood itself had long ago rotted away. In a very painstaking process, the actual golden furniture was reconstructed and included a bed, chairs, a bed canopy and chests, one of the latter containing beautiful silver bracelets. When the sealed alabaster sarcophagus inside was opened with great anticipation, it was found empty, providing a mystery that has yet to be definitively solved.





4TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(21.00–22.00)

THE DANCING GIRL ENTERTAINS

While the sun begins to set, Henti and her fellow dancers can see the lights of the villa as they approach from the village road, each clad in long linen tube dresses that soon enough will be discarded in the corner of a banquet room. Earlier in the week, Henti had been tending her hair in front of her home when she was approached by a remarkably bald official, resplendent in a starched linen skirt and grasping a wooden staff that indicated his authority. It was Userhet, the Overseer of Works. Rumours had been circulating that Userhet's son was to become the husband of another official's daughter. They had already moved in together to form a new household and Henti's suspicions were confirmed when Userhet stopped to chat.

'Are you Henti, the dancing girl?' enquired the overseer.

'I am! How may I serve you?'

'I'm having a banquet to celebrate the union of my son, and we require entertainment.'

Henti thought it odd that Userhet himself would make the preparations, but perhaps he wasn't as completely occupied with his profession as one might think.

'I've seen you dance before and we were all quite impressed. Can you bring along a couple of your friends, too?'

'I would be honoured. When?'

'At sunset. Six days from now, at my villa.'

'Good! How would you like us to dress?'

'With as little as possible. Perhaps something with a few beads.' Henti knew what that meant: 'something with *few* beads'. With her hair well dressed and secured with a headband, and her eyes and lips made up, her 'costume' would leave her virtually naked but for a cord around her waist and a few

strands of beads dangling in front and in back. In actuality, it wasn't much better than the popular fishnet dress, which was a somewhat more uncomfortable option and concealed not much more.

'We'll be there. Please provide the usual payment.' This would involve banquet leftovers – some chunks of prime meat and perhaps even some small jugs of wine, luxuries not readily affordable for the average worker.

'Be ready to dance with vigour and assist the Lady of the House as needed.' Userhet abruptly ended the conversation and departed to make additional arrangements.

An old story taking place during the time of the great pyramids tells of a depressed ruler who hoped to be cheered up. With that goal in mind, beautiful young ladies wearing fishnet dresses were asked to row back and forth on a lake while the king watched. The boats lost their cadence when a fish pendant worn by one of the rowers fell into the water. A magician came to the rescue, parted the waters, and retrieved the lost item so the entertainment could continue.

By the time the appointed day comes, Henti had contacted her friends Menwi and Nebet. The three of them had performed together at several similar elite events and feel like a team. Although none have yet achieved the ultimate, dancing before the Living Horus, Aakheperure, at least tonight they would do so before one of his appointees. As they reach the villa, the Lady of the House, Nefret, brusquely orders the girls to assist the musicians while many guests arrive dressed in their finest: beautifully pleated bright white linen dresses and skirts, exquisite jewellery and stunning wigs, if not actual hair. 'Dancers ... assist the harpists when they arrive, and then we'll start when they're ready.' Userhet is there giving out at least as many orders as his wife, and sporting a shoulder-length wig that is slightly askew and slowly sliding off his naturally smooth pate.

A short time later, Henti greets two elderly, apparently blind men who have appeared at the door, a young child on each arm. Following are a couple of sturdy young men, each carrying a large stringed instrument. Blind harpists are revered and considered the best, and a real sign of an expensive event. 'Blind musicians,' complains the anxious Henti to her friends. 'They're always late. They probably don't even know if it's day or night! Although I heard that one of them is probably faking it. Someone said they saw him repairing his harp.'



PARTY GUESTS ENJOY MUSIC FROM A BLIND HARPISIT ALONG WITH THE ANTICS OF A DANCING GIRL

The harpists are escorted into a large chamber brightly lit by oil lamps on stands, where they are positioned on opposite sides of the room. The other musicians set themselves up in between – some drummers, a few girls with tambourines and clappers, a couple of flautists and several singers. When one of the harpists gives the word, the drummer slaps his instrument rhythmically to gain the attention of the audience; an effective gesture that cues the other musicians to start. The harpists strum their strings and at just the right moment, all join in to produce a loud sound that catches everyone's attention.

This is the cue that Henti and her fellow dancers have been waiting for. They strip off their dresses and dance their way from the sidelines. With their hips swaying, and their costumes leaving very little to the imagination, the three engage in a synchronized, well-rehearsed routine. Arms together, arms apart, to the left, to the right, head down with hair swaying, head up, spin, repeat.

In short order, the audience is clapping. Although the musicians are animated, the dancers are even more so, their barely clad bodies now beginning to gleam from perspiration in the overheated room. Henti always resents that fact. 'They must think sweat is part of my costume!' she often complains. Many of the musicians are as well dressed as the guests, and like the guests, some are given waxy cones of perfume to perch on their heads. The cones would slowly melt in the warming temperatures, releasing beautiful odours. Henti recognizes one of the lutists. It is Sitre, a neighbour with whom she has had a long rivalry. She is dressed in her finest while Henti is virtually naked. Sitre, indeed, is holding back a smirk as she strums her instrument ever more quickly.

The music quietens down a bit when two singers approach. The anticipated love songs would soon begin. The three dancers take a break as the male and female singers stand across from each and begin to alternately sing lines of love poetry back and forth.

'I am your first beloved; I belong to you like a field, which I have caused to flourish with flowers and every sweet plant.'

*'There is no one like my beloved and there is none equal to her.
She is the most beautiful of all women.
She is like the star which appears at the beginning of a
successful year.
Lovely is her magnificence.
Her complexion is luminous and her eyes brilliant. Her lips are
sweet when they speak, as she does not engage in excessive
speech.'*

*'My heart swiftly flies as I remember my love for you.
It does not allow me to walk normally, but jumps from its place.
It does not allow me to put on a dress, nor wear a shawl.'*

Userhet circulates among the guests, praising the performers and offering cups of intoxicating date wine poured by an obliging servant. While his wife is distracted, the overseer also offers each of the now-thirsty dancing girls their own cups, which are quickly drunk and refilled. Soon, the vocal performance is over, and it is once again time for the dancers to spring into action, wriggling and spinning ... On more than one occasion over the last couple of years, Henti has seen a colleague plummet into the musicians, which always seems to perturb them, especially the blind harpists who usually offer the harshest of rebukes. Even if they stay on their feet, drunken, awkward dancing girls might receive a vigorous shove out the door, no payment and a bad reputation exacerbated by the village rumour-mill.



THREE MUSICIANS ENTERTAIN WITH A FLUTE, A LUTE AND A HARP

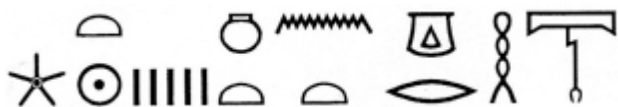
To enhance their renown as ‘fun’ dancers, Henti and her friends often break away from each other to perform ‘solos’, approaching guests, both male and female, touching them under the chin and looking over their shoulders with suggestive smiles. Henti knows that it was antics such as this that had attracted Userhet’s attention and brought about his unusual stroll into the village. Appreciative guests might pull off pieces of their own jewellery and offer them as a gift, or at least, hopefully, provide a reference for a future engagement.

Henti is feeling a bit dizzy from all the spinning and wine, but after the introduction of the married couple, Userhet yells out, ‘Would you like more music and dancing?’ The guests overwhelmingly applaud in the affirmative and the raucous music resumes. ‘Get back out there!’ order the household servants, and the three continued, encouraged by Userhet who gives them additional sips from his alabaster goblet.

Within a few minutes, both Menwi and Nebet collapse on the floor and are carried off into a corner. Henti is left, springing and sweating while the music

never lets up. As she wildly spins much too close to the musicians, she notices too late the strategically outstretched foot of Sitre, the lutist, and lurches and falls forward ... smack into the strings of one of the blind harpists, knocking both him and his instrument into a pile. 'Get off me, you vile dog!' he shrieks as his fellow musicians rush to help him. Henti is pulled from the tangle as Nefret immediately steps forward. 'Out!' she commands, and Henti is dragged outside by her arms to the gate of the villa compound and tossed into the road. Her two exhausted companions suffer a similar fate, the dust from the road clinging to their sweaty skin as their dresses are thrown at them. A compassionate servant places all three, slumped limply across each other, on the back of a donkey, which brings them back to their village. Even in her drunken state, Henti is aware that she won't be asked to dance again any time soon.





5TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(22.00–23.00)

THE PHYSICIAN SEES A PATIENT

Neferhotep the physician is weary and wishes for nothing more than to shut down for the evening and take a long rest. It had already been a very long and busy day when, sadly for him, a naked boy caked in mud arrived exhausted after a long run to announce that someone was ‘injured at the river’ and was on his way. No details were given before he quickly dashed off. A boat accident? An unfortunate encounter with one of the Nile’s dangerous creatures? He would soon find out.

The life of a village physician is full of variety: skin rashes, broken bones, lacerations or an ill child with a high fever are a few of the typical situations. Just a couple of hours ago, a young woman appeared in his doorway complaining of a severe headache. After examining her and feeling her pulse, he created a soothing ointment from the fried skull of a catfish and applied it directly to her head while reciting a magic spell in an effort to drive away internal demons. ‘Come back tomorrow if you’re still in pain,’ he advised as the patient claimed that she already felt much better. Shortly thereafter, a workman appeared with a fracture of his right upper arm bone. The pain was excruciating for him as Neferhotep felt the break and then pulled and twisted on the arm until the bone sections were realigned. The relief was immediate and the patient was sent away with his arm anointed with grease and honey and then bound with an immobilizing splint to enhance healing. ‘Don’t work for a few weeks,’ was the final advice given.

Occasionally patients come to him with afflictions of no particular consequence, and some are regular visitors. Take Userhet, the Overseer of Works, as an example. During the last few months, he had appeared several times demanding urgent assistance for ‘emergencies’ including a common bee sting, a ‘swollen earlobe’, and indigestion after a lavish party at another high

official's villa. And one time, Userhet even had the audacity to show up with a pet monkey suffering from an itch. Neferhotep politely declined to help on that occasion and suggested a veterinarian would be best.

Last week, Userhet arrived seeking a cure for his noticeable baldness. There was to be a banquet soon at his house and he asserted that he wanted to look his best. Although Neferhotep justifiably considered this a frivolous request, he nonetheless consulted one of his precious medical papyri and searched for a therapy. After a few minutes, he announced that he had found a treatment that someone or other in the past had proclaimed as effective. The recipe called for a mixture of equal parts of fat from a hippo, a cat, a crocodile, a lion, a snake and an ibex. Neferhotep located the appropriate materials among the many dozens of pottery jars lined up along three of the mud-brick walls of his healing room, which is actually a large single chamber annexed to his own home.

There wasn't much left of the 'lion fat', but there was enough to provide a first treatment. Luckily, he lives in Thebes, where the possibility of obtaining lion residues, or purported ones, is greater than in a lot of places in Egypt. The ruler, Aakheperure himself, has bragged about his ability to hunt such creatures, and these days there are plenty of exotic ingredients coming in from Nubia to the south. The physician stirred up the mixture in an empty jar and had passed it over to Userhet, saying, 'Apply it on to that shiny head of yours three times a day. And leave a basket of grain with my assistant.'

Egyptian medicine made use of an extensive variety of ingredients to be used singly or in combination for various treatments. Through trial and error, the Egyptians discovered the therapeutic effects of some substances, such as honey, which slows infections. Animal products employed included meats and fats, blood (including that of lizards, bats and pigs), excrement from creatures as small as flies, internal organs, milk and even roasted mice. Almost every known plant seemed to have an application, and numerous medicinal recipes featured one kind or another of vegetable, fruit, part of a tree or spices. Mineral and metal products were also employed, including galena and malachite, clay, copper and natron, the salt-like dehydrating agent widely used by embalmers.

Userhet had enthusiastically thanked the physician, and waddled home to his villa, the medicinal jar tucked under his arm, no doubt with fantasies of a full head of hair within a week's time. 'What a waste,' Neferhotep had concluded. The temple priests actually shave their heads in their efforts to appear clean and hairless, thus achieving the effect of Userhet's purported affliction, and there are plenty of hard-working men tending to Egypt's endless green fields with a similar condition and much more pressing priorities in life. Seeking a cure for baldness seems to be a luxury reserved for the most spoiled of the elite, who themselves, ironically, often sport expensive wigs. Such complaints, though annoyingly trivial, are occasionally part of the job, but the

payment would be welcome.

Before being a physician permanently established in the vicinity of Thebes, Neferhotep had travelled with the military on foreign expeditions, treating the most appalling of injuries and ailments. Outbreaks of disease in an army camp could evolve into a truly dangerous situation and perhaps even spark a retreat. But the results of face-to-face combat between rival ground troops and chariots would often result in the worst of his cases. Neferhotep had seen and treated devastating head wounds from the crush of a mace, massive lacerations from axes and sickle-like swords, and plenty of deep arrow piercings. His military experience and consultative papyri provided rules for treatment. In some cases, the diagnosis recognized that there was nothing that could be done and many of those who were conscious and dying begged to have their remains returned to their beloved Egypt.

All that is in the past. He now considers himself too old to travel into battle so a domestic practice suits him. His military experience, though, has served him well. With many royal construction projects underway nearby, there seems to be an endless stream of injuries incurred while on the job, including everything from eye afflictions as a result of the chipping away of stone to broken bones from falls. And many of his patients are workers under the supervision of the balding Overseer of Works himself, Userhet.

Fortunately, Neferhotep has some assistance. His young son, Nakht, would follow in his father's footsteps as expected. Nakht spends much of his day in training, learning both the scribal arts and medicinal practice. It would be important for him to be able to read the medicinal texts and perhaps even make his own copies as Neferhotep had done. Nakht, however, is still too young to have developed professional patience. He had cruelly suggested to his father that he should have offered the obnoxious Userhet a jar of reeking cat urine or donkey dung to rub into his knobby scalp.

Although he has had a very busy day, Neferhotep is grateful that the worst he has seen today, apart from the broken arm, was a child with a snake bite. Ordinarily he would redirect such a patient elsewhere as there are specialists for that, but he just couldn't turn away the screaming child and her two hysterical parents, one who was dangling at arm's length the flattened carcass of the offending snake. There are many different kinds of poisonous snakes in Egypt – several with lethal bites – but even in its battered state, the physician was able to recognize its kind and pronounced it essentially harmless. Taking a bit of honey from a jar, Neferhotep massaged it into the tiny fang holes on the child's arm while offering reassuring words. Digging through a wooden box, the physician removed an amulet representing the protective eye of the god Horus and placed it around the child's neck. Her parents were understandably grateful and promised to return on the next day with some sort of gift.



ALONG WITH PHYSICAL TREATMENT, AN EGYPTIAN PHYSICIAN MIGHT PRESCRIBE CURATIVE OR PROTECTIVE AMULETS WITH VARIOUS POWERS

Apart from general practitioners, there were several specialists in Egyptian medicine including experts in the eye, women's maladies, afflictions of the stomach and other internal organs, and snake and scorpion bites, as well as dentists. Not surprisingly, the ruler of Egypt had his own collection of the best to serve himself and his family.

A ruckus outside the treatment room announces the arrival of the anticipated patient from the river. Four scraggly men rush through the door carrying a woven mat upon which the victim lies, screaming in pain and bleeding profusely from one leg. As the mat is placed on the floor, one of the men explains that the usually careful Ezer, a brick-maker, was bathing at the river's bank in an attempt to remove the thick layers of clay adhering to his body from a very long day's work. It would have been more sensible to use water from a canal or well, but Ezer was hungry and in a hurry and hopped in the river for a quick bath. Within moments, a juvenile crocodile clamped its jaws around the calf of his left leg and Ezer, in his panic, was somehow able to shake loose the creature and stumble on to the bank. His screams alerted his friends who themselves were quite shaken up by the sight of it all.

The bite has left a series of deep, bleeding tooth marks. Neferhotep hates these kinds of wounds involving animal bites and river water; they could be difficult to treat successfully. Ezer, though, is truly lucky to be alive. A larger crocodile would have not only created vastly more traumatic wounds, but likely would have held him underwater until he drowned. The physician kneels to examine the row of punctures in a pattern representing the crocodile's teeth while Ezer's friends hold him down. Neferhotep provides pressure with a wad of linen over the bleeding holes while inspecting the rest of Ezer's body for additional injuries. 'Nakht! Get some meat from the butcher,' orders the physician and watches his son run out the door.

Grabbing a hefty vase by its handles, the physician pours a large cup of wine laced with lotus blossoms and encourages Ezer to sip from it. The concoction would serve as a kind of anaesthetic to calm his thrashing patient. The potion quickly has its effect, and when Nakht arrives with two thin slabs of beef, Neferhotep is ready to expertly bind the meat against the wounds. 'Now what?' asks one of Ezer's friends. 'Take him home to his family but he needs to be brought back here tomorrow for additional treatment. And tell them to offer a few prayers to Sobek, the crocodile god. Let this be a reminder to you all the next time you're feeling dirty and lazy.' Ezer is carried out on

the same mat he was carried in on.

The Egyptian physician relied on treatments from the simple to the complex. A cure for indigestion, for example, might involve a pig's tooth crushed into powder and baked into four sweet cakes which were then consumed one a day for four days. A recipe 'to heal diseased toes' was much more complicated and included a poultice made from ingredients such as wax, incense, wormwood, poppy plant, elderberries, various tree resins, olive oil and rainwater.

Neferhotep thinks about what would come next. Tomorrow the meat would be removed, and then honey and grease would be applied and the wounds rebandaged. He checks a couple of jars to make sure there is a sufficient supply of the anticipated ingredients. That is enough for Neferhotep. 'Clean up the mess,' he tells his son gently, 'and I'll see you ready to heal when the sun rises.' The physician walks next door, removes his heavily stained linen kilt and climbs into his bed. Laying his head on his wooden pillow, he quickly falls asleep for a few hours reprieve before another round of daily surprises.





6TH HOUR OF THE NIGHT

(23.00–00.00)

THE NOVICE TOMB ROBBER SHOWS RELUCTANCE

As for anyone who enters this tomb unclean, I will grab him by the neck like a duck, and he will be judged for it by the great god.

FROM THE TOMB OF THE OLD KINGDOM OFFICIAL, HARKHUF

Nemwef squats down in the shallow pit and chips away at the plaster with a copper chisel and wooden mallet. He is slow and careful, but too careful for one of his associates, Bebi. ‘Get on with it,’ he urges, ‘or I’ll do it myself!’ It is a bluff. Nemwef knows that Bebi wouldn’t want to get involved in the breaching; that way he could always argue that he never touched the chisel if he was ever caught. ‘No one can hear us in this pit and those who might hear will be recipients of the bounty.’ Only slightly more encouraged, Nemwef doubles his efforts and soon the top of a wall of stacked stones is revealed. One of the blocks falls inward, producing a dull thud and revealing a dark void behind. His heart races as he is now undeniably involved.

Nemwef and Bebi, along with four others, are robbing a tomb. And this isn’t just an ordinary well-endowed tomb of an official, this is the tomb of Queen Meryetamun, wife of the first Amenhotep. She had died at least a hundred years previously and to the best of their knowledge, it has yet to have been visited by any previous thieves; an exciting prospect indeed. Although involved in theft at various levels since a child, Nemwef is new to tomb-robbing. He had heard that it was going on, but had found the idea unacceptably risky in so many ways, yet the temptation proved overwhelming.

The thieves have plenty to worry about. If captured in the act, or caught with royal burial goods, the penalty would likely be a painful death. And then

there is the matter of the gods. Nemwef is now visibly shaking as he is struck with realization. 'Let's stop now before the gods kill us!' he whispers loudly.

'What gods?' responds an exasperated Bebi. 'I've been doing this now for several years and look at me! I'm alive, in good health, and wealthy! Forget about the gods. If they exist, they really don't seem to care. And as for the queen, she's dead. She doesn't need all of those things in the tomb. What a waste!'

'But they're for the provision of her *ka*!' exclaims Nemwef. 'How will her spirit be sustained?'

'You really believe in that *ka* stuff? Too bad. The fact is, we are alive here and now and we can use these burial items more than a dead queen. And what have the royal family and priests ever done for us other than tax our fields in order to live well, or build tombs for themselves like this?'

'But what about judgement? We'll never survive!'

'Judgement? If the gods ever ask me if I have breached the door of a tomb, I can reply in the negative. As for you, it's too late, you wielded the chisel. Now get to work or leave now. I knew I shouldn't bring you along!'

Tomb curses have become the subject of modern legend, the most famous being that associated with the virtually intact tomb of the late Eighteenth Dynasty ruler,

Tutankhamun. Rumours claimed that a tablet was found bearing a threatening curse referring to 'death coming on swift wings' to those who might violate the tomb. Although several visitors to the tomb did die not long afterwards, the fact was that there was no such tablet, and Howard Carter who discovered the tomb in 1922, and therefore was arguably the chief violator lived until 1939. Some intimidating statements have been found on some tombs, but most of them are demands for respect and offerings for the deceased, rather than specifically a curse of imminent death for robbers.

Nemwef picks up his tools and continues until there is enough space for the thieves to climb through and pass out objects from within. 'Let's go in,' commands Bebi, and he crawls through the hole first and lands on a surface on the opposite side. One of the robbers hands him a small oil lamp, which he holds while the others join him inside. Nemwef is last. He hesitates at first with a sick feeling in his stomach but, knowing that he is already deeply involved, he too crawls inside.

The tomb of Meryetamun had been constructed directly under a portion of Hatshepsut's memorial temple. Unlike the high-quality limestone found above, the tomb's corridors and rooms had been carved into an underlying and unreliable layer of shale. It has a strange design with a very short set of stairs behind the sealed door, followed by a corridor and then a right-hand turn into another corridor that terminates by a deep pit, with no way across. The thieves are already aware of this obstacle as Bebi has seen a plan of the tomb provided by a secondary accomplice.

Anticipating the problem, the thieves have brought a long wooden beam with them in order to span the gap and reach a small hall extending

awkwardly off the far left-hand edge of the pit. Given the tight dimensions of the tomb at this point, it is necessary for them to chip away at the floor in a corner diagonally across from the small hall on their side in order for the wood to be positioned. The shale breaks away easily, and soon Bebi is straddling the beam and pushing himself forward to reach the other side. A couple of others take their turn, initially positioning themselves astride the wood so as to be able to pass a few lamps forward.

Everyone quickly and expertly crosses the pit except for Nemwef, who hesitates once more. Most of his larceny has involved granaries, storehouses and a handful of villa bedrooms when the owners were away, and none of which have involved crossing deep pits on a narrow beam. And if he fell in, he is quite confident that his associates would have no hesitation in leaving him there as they went about their looting. He could imagine them unemotionally passing valuable items across the pit as he pleaded for help, and then leaving him to rot or be discovered by the authorities like a trapped rat. Nemwef swallows and pushes himself across the beam to join the others, whom he finds around the corner in a rectangular chamber lined with numerous baskets and jars of various sizes.

Bebi stands to the side holding a lamp while he excitedly shouts out orders, encouraging the search for any portable items of value, especially those things that could be recycled and thus made anonymous so as not to be linked to a burial. A number of the baskets prove disappointing, being filled with dried fruit and other foodstuffs. Nemwef finds others, though, that contain thick, neatly folded sheets of high-quality linen. The inked identifying marks on their edges could easily be clipped off and the cloth likely sold for a very good exchange. Several nicely made wooden boxes are found to contain personal items including cosmetics and mirrors, and there are chests with the queen's personal clothing and numerous exquisite alabaster vessels of various sizes and forms.

A number of small white wooden cases in various shapes lie along the corridor. Bebi says he knows exactly what these are as he gives one of them a swift kick. It bursts open and its contents empty on the floor. It resembles a mummy of sorts, wrapped tightly as it was in linen. 'Anyone hungry for a dried duck?' asks Bebi with a laugh. They, too, were part of the deceased's food provision and are of no interest to the thieves whatsoever. Some of the other cases contain joints of beef or other cuts of meat.

The ransacking continues with baskets being examined or turned over, and a few of the disappointing ones are kept for carrying away some of the desired items. Beyond that chamber lies another, and it is soon clear that this is where the real profit would be made. There lies the wooden coffin of the queen herself, a stunning work of art of enormous size, perhaps twice as big as the occupant herself when alive. For a moment, the robbers gather about quietly, impressed by its extraordinary beauty. The coffin's lid is carved with the likeness of Meryetamun with kind, smooth features gilded in gold, and

striking inlaid eyes and brows. Her hands are likewise beautifully represented and most of the coffin is covered with row after row of beautiful inlays. ‘What are you looking at?’ shouts Bebi to Nemwef. ‘Get on with it!’

Some documents describing the trials of tomb robbers have survived from the end of the New Kingdom. The defendants were accused of robbing several royal tombs and several were found guilty. The penalty for such offences could include execution by burning alive or impalement.

The robbers snap out of their temporary daze and without remorse set about their crass work. With experienced hands, several of the robbers use adzes with copper blades to scrape off the gold gilding, collecting the delicate flakes in tightly woven cloth bags. The inlays are removed, too, knocked off or pried out of the surface. Although generally appalled, Nemwef is impressed by their absolute efficiency as he stands by, receiving the desirable items and moving them to the edge of the pit. At one point, Bebi picks up a well-fashioned chair and heaves it against the chamber’s wall, where it shatters. It had been manufactured mostly from ebony and its pieces could be recycled. And finding a large wooden box containing four large stone jars, he upends it. The jars contain the queen’s mummified entrails. ‘Who would like some royal guts?’

Bebi then orders the coffin’s heavy lid be removed. ‘Let’s see if the queen has anything special for us!’ Surprisingly, there is another coffin inside, this one of normal human dimensions and also exquisitely executed but lacking gilded surfaces. Nemwef watches a couple of men yank off its cover to reveal a beautifully wrapped mummy. Bebi grabs a knife and sets to work. He clearly knows exactly where to make his cuts. He slices through the wrappings over the wrists and upper arms, and then moves to the forehead. He is right on all counts and spectacular jewellery is found in each location. He then attacks the hands and feet, finding caps of gold on each finger and toe.



THE INNER COFFIN OF QUEEN MERYETAMUN

The Eighteenth Dynasty tomb of Meryetamun was discovered in 1929 by American archaeologists working for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was obvious that it had been violated in ancient times and much of the expected burial provisions were missing.

There was evidence, however, that the burial was 'restored' by Twenty-First Dynasty priests hundreds of years later. Noting that the gold foil and inlays of the outer coffin had been removed, the priests had given parts of the coffin a coat of yellow paint instead. Around that same time, additional burials were put into the entrance corridor of the tomb, and thereafter the tomb remained sealed until modern times.

The end result of the carnage is a torn-up bundle of shredded linen exposing the dried-up remnant of a once-living human. 'Take a look at her face,' suggests Bebi. 'Behold, the Queen of Egypt! And nice hair!' he declares, tugging on a few strands of Meryetamun's wavy brown locks. While some laugh, Nemwef refuses to look. His usual thieving never involves violating corpses.

It is time to leave the tomb. There would be no attempt whatsoever at restoring any dignity to the violation, and the queen herself would be left in her pathetic state while the thieves organized their exit. A couple of men are stationed on each side of the pit while two others sit astride the beam to pass the purloined items across. With all back on the near side, bags and baskets are carried through the rest of tomb to the entrance pit from which they entered. Bebi even orders that the beam be brought back with them as it might be useful in future robberies.

Emerging from the tomb, Nemwef is met with a welcome breath of fresh, cool air and a starry sky, the landscape illuminated by a full moon. The job is finished and the goods are divided up for carrying away to a safe place where everything could be sorted out. There are too many baskets and sacks to carry

away all at once, but Bebi has anticipated this and has a nearby caching spot where some of the loot can be temporarily hidden. Barely saying a word, the robbers disperse in all directions to meet up later. Nemwef is left with a large basket of linen and told to go away and keep his mouth shut. He hadn't expected much more, it being his first time, and he suspects that he won't be asked along again. That idea doesn't bother him at all; he greatly prefers stealing from grain silos rather than violating the eternal burial places of royalty.



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